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ÇA IRA!

OR

DANTON IN THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

A Study

BY

LAURENCE GRONLUND, A.M.

AUTHOR OF "THE CO-OPERATIVE COMMONWEALTH."

> "*The Revolution — call it good or bad*
> *As you yearn towards the Future or the Past.*"
>
> VICTOR HUGO.

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DEDICATED

To the Earnest Minority

WHO ARE WAITING AND WORKING FOR

The New Social Order.

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INTRODUCTION.

A KEY TO THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

> "*The Revolution — call it good or bad*
> *As you yearn toward the Future or the Past.*"
> — VICTOR HUGO.

ALL thoughtful people look forward to great changes in the near future, and many think that some catastrophe like that of the French Revolution is impending in all civilized countries. I feel confident that the young, who stand on the threshold of these events, can forestall the threatened catastrophe by assisting in the birth of a new social order. It is, therefore, you, young men and women! whom I especially hope to influence in these pages; whom I desire, not by cleverness, not by brilliancy, but by intense earnestness, to inspire with a new sense of DUTY, with the conviction of a call to interfere actively in the moulding of events. Such is the intent of this volume.

This work, perhaps, will be found, also, to be novel in this: that it presents to you the great French Revolution from a point of view from which it never before has been surveyed in print; not so much that it may serve as an example or a warning (though that also), but that it may be seen to have been a PREPARATION for the work which should be performed by *you*.

All historians, in the English language at least, have presented the Revolution as a panorama of kaleidoscopic pictures, and thereby made it simply a perplexing and puzzling subject. Such pictures are altogether unprofitable to us in our generation, since they necessarily leave the crisis an incomprehensible, an *unexplained* phenomenon. Even in that form it may confidently be said that no portion of history has had such a fascination for all classes of readers as the short period of French annals from 1789 to 1794; but how much greater would the interest be, especially when its centennial comes round, and the centennial of that wonderful year 1793, if we could once ***understand*** it!

However, mere history or simple story-telling cannot possibly explain it: historic philosophy is indispensable to that.

Great Britain possesses an historic philosopher of the first rank in John Morley, who also has written most profoundly and lucidly about the French Revolution, and impartially as well. But even he has not at all explained it; he has in no sense given us a key to it. At the beginning of his interesting work, *Rousseau*, we meet with these words concerning the French Revolution: "That revolutionary drama, whose *fifth act is still dark to us;*" and nowhere does he pretend to lift the veil. If, then, the "fifth act" is hidden from him in darkness, if he has no idea at all as to the outcome, how could he explain it? How could he judge of the forces at work during the crisis? Some *hypothesis* or other in regard to *the future* must be the key we are looking for.

It, however, is a great thing in Morley, that he sees something is yet coming. Other writers, even great ones, have not had an inkling that there was such a thing as a "fifth act" at all. There is, for instance, Edgar Quinet, beyond question a most considerable French philosopher, whose masterpiece is a work entitled *La Révolution*, in which he considers the Revolution as an episode in French history of ten years' duration; as a kind of comet that suddenly entered the path of history in 1789, and as suddenly left it in 1799, and which might have procured incidentally for the French such blessings as the American Revolution procured for us.

But there is a sect of philosophers who have gone to work in the right way, who have framed an hypothesis of the future, and attempted to explain the French Revolution by such hypothesis: the Positivists, the disciples of Auguste Comte. The French representatives of that school — M. Lafitte, Dr. Robinet, and Antonin Dubost in his *Danton and Contemporary Politics* — are aware of a "fifth act." They insist that the conflict of forces during the Revolution and in modern society will result in a civilization where the whole political and industrial power of the community will be lodged in the hands of great chiefs of industry, great capitalists, who, by an organized public opinion, — that is, by a spiritual authority working by public opinion, — will be compelled to apply their power and wealth to social uses, and thus finally do away with misery and pauperism.

This method is undoubtedly, as said, the only right one, and a profoundly philosophical one, and their hypothesis is a definite enough conception and a *working* hypothesis. But is it correct? that is to say, is it at all likely that they have guessed right as to the future social order? There is certainly not the least evidence that our great capitalists are becoming more and more inclined to use their increasing power for the social good, and, moreover, no evidence at all, that such a spiritual authority is going to assert itself; in other words, that any new edition of the Catholic hierarchy of the Middle Ages is being evolved or will be accepted.

Nevertheless, this Positivist hypothesis has been very fruitful. Here, as elsewhere, an incorrect hypothesis has been instrumental in disclosing many new facts and relations.

There have been and are, however, other thoughtful men, who, speculating upon the consequences of the French Revolution, and listening to the footfalls of coming events, have formed another equally well working hypothesis as to their nature, and as to the new social order which they will inaugurate. I have in another volume[1] assumed to sketch, in its broad outlines, this future social order to which, I, with them, look forward, and which I have styled "The Co-operative Commonwealth." It is this hypothesis I here purpose for the first time to use, so to speak, as spectacles through which to look at the French Revolution; in other words, I assume the co-operative commonwealth to be, if not the final, at least the *next*, stage in the evolution of human societies, and shall try to explain the French Revolution by considering it as a most important step toward that stage.

I believe I shall convince many of my readers of the correctness of my hypothesis, from its ability to account for all phenomena. And if it is the true one, then the French Revolution will necessarily become invested with a new interest, with a *personal* interest, for us, for it will thereby become a *part of our history*. Its relation to us will then be reversed. As hitherto it has been looked upon as a curiosity to be explained, so now it will be used to explain our own situation. It will not only become an example or a warning to us, but a guide that will teach us, not to prevent revolutions, for that would be to prevent progress, but how to prepare for our *Coming* ***Revolution***, and how to carry it through in an *orderly* manner.

And Danton? It is evident from the above that my object has not been to write his biography; that my object has been a much wider one. Yet to describe and discuss the events of the French Revolution is necessarily to discuss the work of Danton, since it fills a greater part of the French annals during the five fire-breathing years than the work of all his contemporaries combined. It ought, however, to be distinctly understood what he did and what he did not do. He did not *make* the Revolution. No one did. It made itself in the minds of the twenty-five million Frenchmen then existing, Danton's included. But even here he may be taken as the very embodiment of the Revolution, and better than any one else as the typical French revolutionist of those days. Perhaps he also contributed more than any one else, not excepting Mirabeau, to remove the stumbling-blocks in the way of the Revolution.

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[1] *The Co-operative Commonwealth*, published by Swan Sonnenschein, London, Eng., and Lee and Shepard, Boston, Mass.

But while he did not make the Revolution, he more than once *saved* it. He was, indeed, as Carlyle called him, the *Atlas* who in the most critical period carried the Revolution on his shoulders. Moreover, being a more constructive genius than any of his contemporaries, he laid the right foundation for the future; and his policy should have the credit for nearly all the good his successors accomplished, as it would have saved France from all the subsequent penalties she has had to pay, had it been constantly pursued.

Next, Danton the monster, Danton as nearly all our historians paint him, is purely a creation of the imagination. It is the French Positivists above mentioned who at last have rehabilitated him, and presented him in his true proportions. That Danton, as a man and citizen, was pure, was an heroic character, is now abundantly proved by the great mass of new material which these Positivist philosophers, as well as Alfred Bougeart, have collected during the last twenty-five years, but which no one, I believe, has translated into English as yet. Indeed, his principal defect, one that cost France dearly, was his perfect lack of ambition.

The principal lessons which this volume will draw from the French Revolution, in the way of example and warning, are, that Danton was a true instrument in the hands of the Power behind Evolution, and just the *kind of leader we in our generation should encourage;* that, on the other hand, good intentions alone avail nothing in popular leaders, and that therefore we should, *with all our might, repress our Robespierres, Héberts, and Marats.*

The words *ça ira* are of American origin. Benjamin Franklin, while ambassador to the court of France during the American Revolution, was constantly questioned about the war with England. His usual answer was, "*Ah, ça ira!*" ("Oh, it goes!") This gave rise to the first revolutionary song, jubilantly chanted by all patriots on the anniversary of the taking of the Bastille, and commencing,—

"*Ah, ça ira! ça ira! ça ira!*"

In describing the doings of the French *bourgeoisie*, from the moment they acquired influence, I have made considerable use of that most interesting work, *Lundis Revolutionnaires*, by M. Avenel.

ÇA IRA;

OR,

DANTON IN THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

CHAPTER I.

THE RISING GENERATION.

1748-1789.

> "*The interest of historic study lies in tracing the devious course of the sacred torch, as it shifts from bearer to bearer. It is not the bearers who are most interesting, but the torch.*" — JOHN MORLEY.

LIBERTY AND LAW. — THE DRAMA OF HISTORY. — THE "SACRED TORCH" PASSES FROM ENGLAND TO FRANCE. — THE REVOLUTION MADE BY BOOKS. — DANTON'S YOUTH. — JUNE 17. — "ÇA IRA!"

WAS the French Revolution a failure?

Our most eminent historians affirm it. First, there is Sir Archibald Alison, who, in his celebrated *History of Europe*, declares that the French Revolution, "the most impassioned effort ever made for the attainment of *public freedom*," has failed, and failed not only for a time, but forever. Then there is the not less eminent William Smyth, late professor of history at Cambridge, who, in his published and widely read *Lectures*, lays repeated stress on the "fact" that the French Revolution did not succeed, and on "the great calamity that the *cause of liberty was thus, on the whole, lost.*" These two authorities, not to speak of lesser lights, have furnished vast numbers of lazy-thinking people with whatever opinions they have of the French Revolution.

I contend that this view is a huge blunder; if it is, it vitiates all their other conclusions, of course. I insist that the French Revolution was and is a *grand success*, a *most signal success:* the dominant class in France to-day would hardly be so proud of "the principles of the Revolution," and be preparing to celebrate its centennial with imposing pageants, were it not; nor, to be sure, would it pulsate in the heart of all Frenchmen of to-day, whether they curse or bless it.

How account for the blunder?

In the case of the above "authorities" that is easy enough. They are simply historians, — story-tellers; and, moreover, story-tellers who have looked only at the surface of things. Note how they talk of "liberty" and "public freedom." That, to be sure, was what the actors in the French Revolution talked about; the word "liberty," meaning "absence of restraints," was constantly in their mouths, and, I grant, in the mouth of no one more than my hero, Danton. Our superficial historians, then, have contented themselves with taking the revolutionists on their word, and have concluded that Liberty was, in truth, the end and aim of the French Revolution; and, since Liberty was finally crippled, therefore the Revolution failed.

It is, however, not historians alone who fall into this error; even philosophers, — ay, the great French philosopher Edgar Quinet has fallen into it. He dwells on the motto of the revolutionists: *Être libre, ou mourir* ("To be free, or die"), and regrets that they who knew so well how to die, did not know how to conquer freedom.

Well, Frenchmen of a century ago had very good reasons for being preoccupied with Liberty. They were dominated by these two sentiments, — a violent discontent with their actual condition, and ardent hopefulness as to the future. Liberty, then, was for the time being their most pressing need, for it was the indispensable means to get out of their condition. This need was, with them, instinctive. These revolutionists, even the greatest among them, were really blind actors, guided by instinct. No wonder they mistook Liberty for an *end*, and virtually made an idol of it. Yet Liberty, after all, did in their hands prove a most excellent instrument, and by the help of it they accomplished what they had to accomplish.

But it is inexcusable that any thoughtful person in our generation should, with the experience and teachers we have had, still be making an idol of Liberty, and not yet know that absence of restraints is valuable only as a *means*, never as an end. Never! When Liberty is made an end, it always and necessarily defeats itself; that is to say, when citizens are unrestrained, completely "at liberty," they always will, if able, encroach upon their fellows, and monopolize all power. However virtuous, in the long run they will always do it: it is human nature. In truth, this is the lesson which Carlyle and Emerson have so unceasingly been trying to inculcate, — that Liberty in that sense is a very poor thing indeed. And that noble man, Mazzini, likewise insisted continually upon this: that Liberty, though "holy as a protest against oppression," and powerful to destroy, is yet impotent to found any thing.

No, liberty was not the true object aimed at by the French Revolution, nor was it its sanction. Something else was, — something very different; something not pertaining to the individual at all, but above all individuals. To bring out this fact, is precisely the main purpose of this book, and will throughout give it its tone.

First of all, we must reduce the French Revolution to its true proportions. Here, also, the revolutionary actors deceived themselves. They fancied that their nation had suddenly jumped far ahead of its contemporaries, and, from its own all-conquering initiative, was about to inaugurate a brand-new state of society, something of which the outside barbarians could never so much as dream. That patriotic Frenchmen even now are possessed with the same idea, may be excused; but when our historians, and especially philosophers, still look on the Revolution as an event *sui generis*, as an isolated fact in history, that again is a mark of superficiality.

Here the profoundness of an historic philosopher like John Morley manifests itself. On the first page of his *Rousseau* he places side by side the series of remarkable changes of the first centuries of our era, and the similar series of the last two centuries; to the former he gives the generic name of "Christianity," and to the latter, *in which he includes the French crisis*, that of "the Revolution."

By the way, Gladstone once maintained that the English way of saying "the English Revolution," "the American Revolution," or "the French Revolution," is the correct one, and contrasted it with "the loose Continental usage" of speaking, as Morley does, of "the Revolution." The European usage, though certainly liable to misapprehension, is, it seems to me, really a profound form of speech.

For I insist, with Morley, that the French Revolution, far from being a *unique* phenomenon, as thought by the revolutionary actors, is, in truth, an integral part of that set of social changes which was first successfully started by Luther in Germany, — changes that have involved the whole of Western Europe, and in whose vortex we still find ourselves at this day. The French Revolution was simply a *partial* and *local* manifestation of these changes; in other words, *it was the application of this series of changes to France*, primarily, and to this is precisely due its success.

That is what the revolutionary actors did. *They effected this change in France;* they did it in a most effective, in a startlingly effective, manner. That was their merit, and thereby they placed France for a time in advance of our race; but they did it unconsciously, instinctively. They did not know the import of their own doings, because they ignored, even despised, their whole previous history.

Yet, in order to understand these changes, it is necessary to understand history; not the history of kings, their mistresses and their intrigues, or of any individual or individuals soever, but the history of the *collective life* of humanity, in which each of us has his proper life. History concerns itself properly with the *race*, which has as rigid a unity as any of its individual members; with *society*, which is the guardian of our destiny as a race, and which is not an empirical necessity, but a living, organizing force. History is the instinctive effort of the common, *associated*, mind of the race to come to self-consciousness, to put on form, to realize its own majestic unity. And so the main purpose of history is, *to bring man to a proper acquaintance with himself.*

When man thus comes to a proper acquaintance with himself, to real self-consciousness, he cannot help becoming aware of a something animating humanity, and directing the march of the race. Human events cannot possibly be "the fortuitous vagaries of an eyeless destiny." The idea that they were the inscrutable decrees of an *in*human Providence, of a lordly, capricious, *lawless* despot, which was current for centuries, is not tenable any longer. The tendency seems to be, to consider them the ceaseless efflux of a helpful Presence in Humanity working by law, — the "sacred torch" of Morley, the God of Christians, the Power behind Evolution I like to call it; and history then becomes a true drama, plotted by that Power. This, after all, is the only sane foundation for any hope in our social future. It was in this connection, as already remarked by Henry James, sen., that Carlyle showed himself weak. He maintained that there is a Supreme Spirit in human affairs, but never dreamt of that truth having any human virtue, being of any living efficacy to help us; hence he called it "the Eternal *Silences*," and rather pitied those who believed in its effective power to guide us.

The drama of history, then, means that human affairs are directed by something superior to ourselves, superior to society itself; that *we are always living under law*, under authority, under a moral government, recognized or unrecognized. The French revolutionists, also, were, unknown to themselves, obeying this authority; authority was the sanction of the French Revolution, which in the last resort was successful, because the expression of this Supreme Will.

And, as it so happens that just now we have become enabled, as we shall see, to interpret history correctly, we now can conform to this moral government of the world, and cooperate with it. Louis Blanc thought that human progress is from authority in the past, through individualism in the present, to fraternity in the future. But authority and fraternity are not antagonistic; therefore it is more correct to say, from absolutism in the past (a human authority, now seen to have been a sham authority), through present individualism, to a *real, rightful authority*, whatever it be, based on the verities of things. Liberty, based on the "rights" of the individual, is undoubtedly at times a sacred thing, but, after all, but a temporary necessity. Mazzini undoubtedly is right: "What the world is at present thirsting for *is authority*." We all of us, *without any exception whatever*, want to be guided.

* * *

In what did this set of changes consist?

We are now able to answer this question, — in other words, able to unravel the plot of the drama of history, — because we lately have been furnished with the right *key*.

Men have at all times had a suspicion that there is an intelligible law of things, which it is our urgent business to ascertain, and then conform to. We at length have ascertained the law (which is the greatest intellectual revolutionary achievement since the times of Copernicus): it is that of *evolution*. To apply the theory of evolution to history, is applying the key to it.

We now know that societies, nations, move; next, that they move, not by leaps, but by growths. But Herbert Spencer, who has done so much to popularize the theory of evolution, seems to imply, in all his writings, that this motion is by uniform, gradual, regular, and always slow steps. This is certainly not so.

Nearly the whole historic period of man is filled up with two long, *almost stationary* periods, — organic periods, we can, with Saint-Simon, properly call them; periods in which mankind secretes a kind of hard, thick shell around itself. The first of these "organic" periods begins with the dawn of history, and ends with the Roman republic; the second takes us through another thousand years, from the ascendency of Christianity to the Reformation. The former constitutes the Ancient World, with its golden age of Greece and Rome; the latter, the Middle Age, which also has its golden age: that period in which Dante lived, which Carlyle is perfectly right in calling, "with its Feudal body and Catholic soul, the highest ideal yet realized by man."

The stationary condition, then, is the rule, is the normal condition of the race: and mark, it is in that condition that mankind enjoys the fruits of its struggles and martyrdoms; it is then that the arts and literature flourish; it is then we find high ideals, corporate responsibility, and public spirit; it is then men sacrifice their lives for the common weal as a matter of course. That condition, finally, is marked by *unity*, by system, — precisely what makes these periods so durable, lasting, *organic*.

Thus, of historic times there remain two shorter periods, — that from the Roman republic to the establishment of Christianity; and another, not yet closed, from Luther to our days. John Morley has observed that these two short periods, each lasting about four hundred years, somehow correspond to each other; and both are periods of changes, transition states, *critical* periods, again to call them after Saint-Simon. The bond that hitherto united men — the collective conception of the world — has, both then and now, been broken, and every one is left to seek truth in his own way: that is to say, while hitherto there has been systematic unity, now every thing is *planless*, orderless; everywhere perfect anarchy reigns, — in beliefs, in morals, in politics, in social relations, and, worst of all, in industrial relations. While before things were nearly stationary, now things are evidently in motion. But this motion is far from being regular. First it is slow, very slow; then it becomes quicker and quicker; then it moves with railroad speed — look at our century! Lastly, the final change to the new organic order — the *revolution*, in fact — may be accomplished so swiftly that the living generation can hardly recover its breath.

But there is constant progress, — progress along a certain line, not a straight nor a curved, but a spiral line, like unto a winding staircase. Each of these periods, critical as well as organic, is really on a higher plane than any of its predecessors.

There is a constant growth in co-operation. Our whole civilization may be called a lesson in co-operation; and note, that it is around the working-classes that the battle of progress has constantly been waged.

In the first organic period, in ancient Greece and Rome, we find *compulsory* co-operation in its harshest form, — slavery.

In the second organic period, the Middle Ages, we find a milder, much more humane form, also of *compulsory* co-operation, — serfdom.

In the transition period in which we are living we have attained to *voluntary* co-operation for those who have means, for the well-off middle classes, and a still milder form of *compulsory* co-operation for those who have no property, — wagedom. Compulsory? Yes, they are compelled by their daily wants.

What the French Revolution was to do was, to introduce into France, primarily, this transition period, this critical period, with its propertied middle classes and its wage system. And that was to be done, first, by putting an end to the feudal, Catholic system of the Middle Ages; and next, by placing the middle classes into supreme power. What important function they were charged with, and how they have performed it in France, we shall afterwards see.

* * *

This very change, however, which now was to be worked out in France, had already been accomplished in England in all essential respects. Instead of having to do something *unique*, as the French revolutionists fancied, they needed simply to copy the model they had in England; and that is what, after all, they virtually did. We know that both king and patriots anxiously studied the histories of Charles the First and James the Second; and their instincts did not mislead them, for the "Commonwealth" of 1649 and the revolution of 1688 form together, in truth, England's "French Revolution." These did for Great Britain what the French Revolution did for France, — overthrew the divine right of kings, absolutism, and invested the plutocracy with political power.

As this part of British history was nothing less than a precedent for France, we ought to dwell on it a little.

The English plutocrats had obtained dominion in the towns as early as the fourteenth century. That dominion had gone on increasing to such an extent, that two centuries later a statute had to be passed to protect small masters against rich ones. This statute (2d and 3d, Phil. and Mary) recited that "rich clothiers do oppress the weavers by paying less wages than formerly; by engrossing the looms, and letting them out at unreasonable rents; by employing unskilful journeymen, etc." During the reign of Charles a series of technical discoveries throw manufactures altogether into the hands of large capitalists. They carry the trade to places free from the control of the craft-guilds, like Birmingham and Manchester, until the guilds gradually die out before this rising great industry.

And now events run on precisely as we find they do one hundred and fifty years later in France. The King needs money, and calls on the rich middle classes for it. The Long Parliament corresponds to the French National Assembly, even to the extent that it, too, clears landed property of many inconvenient and oppressive feudal burdens, for the benefit of capitalists. John Pym, like Sieyès later, initiates the political revolution in England by insisting that "the House of Commons is the essential part of Parliament," and by telling the lords that "the Commons are ready to save the kingdom alone." When at length the physical struggle commences, London and the middle classes side with Sir Harry Vane and the Commonwealth men, as Paris later on does with Danton and the Mountain. Finally, on Jan. 4, 1649, the Rump Parliament declares that "the Commons of England, being chosen by and representing the people, *have the supreme power in this nation;*" and this declaration foreshadows the action of the French Convention.

Besides these essential correspondences, there are many curious coincidences. Naseby of 1645 coincides with "Aug. 10;" Pride's Purge, applauded by Sir Harry, with what I shall call the suspension of the Girondins, contributed to by Danton. In both revolutions the reigning kings were executed, — and, by the way, it is almost comical, when we think of the fate of their own royal family, to recall the reproaches and contumely which Frenchmen of the age of Louis XIV. heaped on the English for their "brutality" and "disloyalty" in their treatment of Charles and James. Both crises ended in the supremacy of successful, selfish soldiers; in both countries this supremacy was followed by a restoration; in one, as in the other, the restored monarch was followed by his brother; and lastly, in one as in the other, this brother was exiled, and gave way to a constitutional, middle-class king. But there was this essential and never-to-be-forgotten difference, because it augurs well for the *Coming* Revolution in Great Britain: that the foreign potentates did not attempt to save their crowned English brother, while they did interfere in the French Revolution, and thereby raised up — the Terror.

It is, however, in the region of ideas that the connecting link between the two revolutions is to be found.

Our acts are always under the empire of our ideas, consciously or unconsciously. More particularly is this so with social revolutions; i.e., changes from one social order to another, even if only to a transitional order. These always start in the region of ideas, and first of all in those ideas that have the most powerful dominion over men, — their religious conceptions, their views of the universe and their own place in it. Naturally this change first shows itself in the form of scepticism, religious anarchy; then the anarchy filters down to those ideas that relate to our fellow-men, to society, to our moral and political notions; finally the anarchy reaches economics, the basis of society. *There the real revolution, the real change, takes place;* and there, on the new basis, our new political, moral, and religious ideas are reconstructed.

Accordingly the English Revolution commenced with the loosening of religious authority by Wickliffe, the father of the Reformation. We know for certain that this movement in religion caused the movement in political ideas, because Hobbes tells us that "the enemies of King Charles were Presbyterians, Independents, Anabaptists, Fifth-Monarchy men," and that their opposition "arose from the private interpretation of Scriptures in the mother-tongue." Now, it was one of the striking peculiarities of Protestantism, that it set people to study admiringly the history of the Hebrew nation, "the most rebellious people on the face of the earth," and thus made the Hebrew example an incentive to them to change the form of their own government, and the Old Testament a basis for their political speculations. But note this peculiarity in the English Revolution: that the political philosophy which justifies it was not elaborated *before* the political innovation, but only years afterwards, for the good and sufficient reason that printing was as yet but little developed.

It was from and after the year 1700 that the two eminent English philosophers Hobbes and Locke, to ease their consciences, made known their new revolutionary political speculations. Hobbes' celebrated theory was, that a covenant between man and man created "that great leviathan called the Commonwealth." In other words, he taught the nation, first, that the basis of society is contract, or that the origin of all power is in the people; next, that the end of government is the weal of the Commonwealth, or the people's good: and he very soon made these ideas generally accepted, which forever put an end to the old patriarchal theory of society. Locke then appeared, and added the lesson of the right of resistance to bad rulers.

Now the "sacred torch" passes over from England to France; that is to say, these English revolutionary principles are transplanted into French soil, are adopted and elaborated by French writers. It is from the date of the first French book embodying them that we ought truly to date the French Revolution. It is from the date 1748 that France commences her glorious career, which for many years places her in advance of other nations; and that glory is thus due to the fact, that, unlike their successors, her writers were then willing to learn from other nations.

* * *

These writers were Montesquieu, Diderot, Rousseau. These three men made the French Revolution, as far as any individuals can be said to have made it.

A "revolution," in its narrower sense, is the sweeping, the *decisive change, which all progress passes through at some point in its career.* It only takes a minute to bring into the world the infant whose preparation has required nine months in the mother's womb. Birth is a revolution.

So it took only a few minutes, on a certain June day in the year 1789, for the French Revolution to be born; but its preparation, its making, lasted forty years. It was made by the above writers in the brains of Danton and his fellows of the generation born after 1748.

And *it was made by books*, because printing had now so far advanced, that they who were to be emancipated could all read. And, by the way, the Coming Revolution, in like manner, will, first and foremost, be a mental revolution, and be made by books; for now all can read.

The book of *Montesquieu*, *The Spirit of Laws*, appeared 1748, eleven years before Danton's birth. Nobody reads the book now for information's sake. It is extremely shallow, both in knowledge and thoughts. But when it appeared, it took the whole public, especially the middle classes, by storm. It colored the whole literature of France for the rest of the century: and no wonder, as it introduced just the ideas that were then needed; it gave *working answers* to the burning political questions.

Montesquieu passes in review all the laws and political institutions of the various countries, and compares their excellences and defects. At length he reaches Great Britain, before whose institutions he remains standing in unbounded admiration, almost adoration; and he inoculates the whole French nation with the same feeling. *Anglomania* becomes, from that moment, the dominant passion of Frenchmen. Of course, what Montesquieu found so excellent was the liberty and consideration enjoyed in England by the common citizens of property, but he did not analyze either his feelings or their object. As a matter of fact, neither he nor his contemporaries had any idea of the true nature of human societies. His own leading doctrine was, "It is government and institutions which make men what they are." He found that the principal among British institutions was the British *Constitution*, and as a principal feature in that constitution a *division of powers*, one checking the other. This, then, he thinks, must be the secret spring that causes British well-being. Go to work, then, France, and copy faithfully this constitution, and particularly this division of powers!

This, in fact, gives rise to the two leading principles of his book, to wit:

"In order that there may not be an abuse of power, things should be so arranged that *one power checks another;*" and

"The problem is, not to destroy authority, but to *render it impotent.*"

These are splendid "principles" for a *transition state*, such a one as was about to be introduced into France.

No wonder he awoke the political passions of the middle classes. They saw in him their true legislator, since he so charmingly disarmed the authority under which they were fretting, and gave so many guaranties to the individualism, the license, for which they were sighing. No wonder, that, as soon as the Revolution was an accomplished fact, he became the inspirer of the political labors of the middle classes, of the Constituent Assembly, and then of the Girondin party!

Next, *Diderot*, the inspirer of the Dantonists, in particular; this giant, whose importance to the Revolution the French at last have recognized by erecting a statue to him in Paris on the spot where his house formerly stood. He shall be here considered only as the chief of that band of writers who created the *Encyclopædia*, "that monumental ruin of thirty stout volumes," which now are still less read than *The Spirit of Laws*. Yet what influence they once had!

The *Encyclopædia* is the gospel of labor, a glorification of productive industry, for which it inspired its readers with an earnest enthusiasm as the true basis of the new era. "To turn over volume after volume is like watching a splendid panorama of the busy life of the time," says Morley. Its significance precisely consists in this, — that it laid down, with a fearlessness that was risky at the time, the necessary *economic* conditions for the coming middle-class rule, and demanded unlimited freedom in all relations of industrial life. It was no small merit that it anticipated all the essential propositions laid down by Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations*, which appeared several years later. Indeed, it was the Encyclopædists who first made the name "political economy," as well as the thing itself, popular. We have the testimony of Voltaire for the latter fact: "The nation, tired of verses, tragedies, comedies, operas, romances, moral reflections, and theological disputes, finally commenced talking about corn. They forgot all about wine, in order to talk of wheat. They wrote useful things about agriculture, which every one read except agriculturists."

The Encyclopædists first claimed the abolition of *guilds.* "These," they said, "are supposed to be established to guarantee capacity and integrity in artisans and manufacturers: they at present do nothing of the kind; they have become monopolies, hurtful to the national interests. The rich and the great have laid hands not only on the land, the fields, and the buildings, but through these guilds they have interdicted the industrious and skilful the use of their labors. They must be uprooted, and perfect liberty be established in all the trades and professions."

France was at that time divided into provinces, each with its custom-houses. The Encyclopædists demanded their abolition, as "they paralyze commerce."

In many respects they write just as an orthodox economist of to-day. They find interest perfectly legitimate; they want it not only legalized, but the rate of interest left to the lender and borrower to settle. Capital is, according to them, legitimately entitled to its profits. "Just as corn, when sowed in the earth, reproduces with advantage, so the capitalist sows in commerce his and his ancestors' industry." They wish to bring on competition, "which will lower prices." It should be steadily borne in mind that such ideas were at the time absolutely new.

Another quotation, from the pen of Diderot himself, will show how suited to the middle classes their other ideas were: "It is property which makes the citizen. Every man who has possessions in the State is interested in the State; it is by means of his possessions that he acquires a right of having himself represented." In their eyes, then, the first of "the rights of man" was middle-class right to property.

But understand that they were eminently noble men, with noble hearts. They had an undivided love for all their fellow-men, a steadfast faith in human nature, and firm aspirations after justice and progress. They really fancied that the liberty and equality — i.e., equality before the law — after which they strove would make this world into a paradise. Liberty was to them a young, beautiful, promising maiden ; they had no idea that she could ever, by remaining unmated, become an old hag.

Even their atheism was a fruit of their nobility of heart. The God they repudiated was the omnipotent, lordly, capricious one of dogmatic religion, revelling in his own unemployed strength, while complacently looking down on the infinite miseries of his creatures here below, and therefore clearly on the side of the rich and mighty.

Rousseau, the inspirer of most of the Mountain party, was, in almost all his ideas, a very antipode to both Montesquieu and the Encyclopædists, and yet his teachings pulled men the same way as theirs, and even with greater force. The latter, as we have seen, were enthusiastically for improvement and progress, for which Rousseau had only contempt. Could there be a greater divergence? But they agreed in hating the society in which they were living, and in adoring antiquity, — that was their point of union.

Why this love of theirs for antiquity? It is a most interesting question, and this is probably the right answer: They wanted to make their fellows disgusted with their present situation ; they could not do this by contrasting it with a future of which they knew nothing, not even the elements. Thus compelled to contrast it with the past, with antiquity, they presented in glowing colors the advantages which antiquity possessed over the Middle Ages, *omitting all the glaring disadvantages*, because themselves blind to them.

Rousseau in particular had a tenacious liking for Sparta and Lycurgus, and employed all his remarkable passion and wonderful persuasiveness and sonorousness to make his contemporaries share that liking. He succeeded triumphantly with two sinister disciples, — Robespierre and the young fanatic Saint-Just.

His *Social Contract* became an armory from which the most terrible weapons were drawn wherewith to batter down the old society. This little book, also, is but rarely read now, — and I really should consider it a sign of a weak mind in our times to study it for the sake of instruction, — but how many editions of it were published during its first twenty years of existence! It first appeared in 1761.

The reason of its success must be sought in the fact, that men, worked upon by the spirit of the age, felt an irresistible inclination to alter their social condition, and were exceedingly desirous to find arguments wherewith to satisfy their consciences, and theories that would clothe their aspirations with righteousness. The *Social Contract* furnished such arguments — specious arguments — in abundance. Men grasped all the phrases convenient to them, and rejected the rest.

All the leading doctrines of the little book are those of Hobbes and Locke, already spoken of, which Rousseau modified just enough to suit his purpose. Its central doctrine, which made it a veritable "gospel of Jean Jacques," is the dogma of the sovereignty of the people; in other words, of popular absolutism. Society is founded on a convention, a pact which human will has made, and which, therefore, human will can unmake or change at pleasure. When a government usurps this sovereignty, the pact is broken, and the citizens are restored to their natural liberty; they may then be forced to obey, but are not morally obliged to. Now, since the book commences with the words, "Man, though born free, is yet everywhere in chains," it follows that the pact *is* broken *everywhere*. This was the way he inspired the people with the *right* to break the social bond at the same time as he inflamed them with sufficient passion to feel themselves *able* to do it. And thus this book became the mightiest revolutionary instrument for doing what was to be done, and Jean Jacques deserves our gratitude for it.

It has been remarked about all three writers, that their books are not read, and deserve not to be read, in our days. However well they served their purpose a century ago, they contain nothing that can satisfy our needs to-day. What the French Revolution had to do was, essentially, to *destroy* a social order, and then to build up a merely temporary transition state. But the Coming Revolution is essentially constructive, and is to build up a virtually permanent social order; hence the books that are to prepare for it must be grounded on social science, as much as medical books on biology. But the writers we have now discussed knew nothing of social science, had not the remotest ideas of the *nature* of human societies; that the first two had grasped the idea of *progress*, was already a great advance.

The mental revolution was now complete. Every one noticed it, even princes of the blood. In December, 1788, they said, in a memorandum to the king, "A revolution is taking place in the principles of governments, brought on by a ferment in the minds of the people. Institutions held sacred for so many ages are made subjects of debate, and even decried as replete with injustice."

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It was in this mental atmosphere that Danton grew up, — *Georges Jacques Danton*, the French Sir Harry Vane, who was more than once to save France and the Revolution, and then be butchered.

He was born Oct. 26, 1759, at Arcis-sur-Aube, a little country town about a hundred miles from Paris, situate in what was then the province of Champagne, which has given birth to so many celebrated Frenchmen. He belonged by birth to the middle classes. His father died soon after his birth, and his mother a few years afterwards married one Ricordain, a small manufacturer, who proved himself an excellent stepfather.

Danton got a fair classical education in various schools at Troyes, the chief city of Champagne. There are only two incidents worth noting from his school-days. One is the crowning of the young king Louis XVI. at Rheims, a city distant twenty-eight miles from Troyes, in the year 1774. The young lad, then fifteen years old, who was destined one day to unmake that very king, determined to go and see how he was made. He goes on foot, sees every thing, returns, and gets some slight punishment for absenting himself without leave. What seems to have impressed him most, besides the King's taking the oath, was the numerous birds which they had let loose inside the church. "Nice liberty!" he used to say to his schoolfellows, "to fly within four walls, with nothing to eat." Quite a suggestive remark.

The other incident was when a schoolmate, a big lad named Paré, who afterwards occupied high positions, was to be corporally punished for some slight offence. Danton boldly stepped forward, and protested against the bodily punishment of so large a boy as a shame, and against the dignity of the whole class; and he succeeded in having the punishment altered.

This last incident already shows Danton's principal characteristics, which clung to him during life, — affectionateness and boldness. He loved dearly his mother, his stepfather, and afterwards his first and second wife. He made perfect confidants of his mother, and later of his wives. As a boy, he was beloved by his teachers and fellow-scholars, in spite of his face being undeniably a very ugly one. His natural ugliness had been much increased by his very boldness. When a boy, he had fights with almost all kinds of pugnacious animals, and they generally left their marks on him. Once his upper lip was cut, then his nose was broken, and lastly he took a fever from bathing, which ended in small-pox, that marked him for life. But he was of a frank, communicative disposition; that ugly face of his, nevertheless, was radiant with intelligence and good humor; and his turbulent character was calmed by the least caress of his mother.

Later on he frequently alluded to his looks in his addresses: "My *Medusa-head*, which causes all aristocrats to tremble." At the Jacobin Club he once boasted of having "those features which characterize the face of a freeman." In his hour of trial, turning to the jurors of the revolutionary tribunal, he proudly asks, "Have I the face of a hypocrite?" And in his supreme moment on the scaffold, he says to the executioners, "Show my head to the people: it is good to look at."

In 1780 he comes to Paris to enter the office of a notary, as pupil. Being asked to give a sample of his handwriting, he frankly answers, "I have not come here to be a copyist," and the notary rather seems to like this self-esteem in his pupil. A story is told of him, dating from this period: Once, when bathing in the Seine, and seeing the towers of the Bastille looming up a little way off, he cried out in angry tones, "When will these walls come down? Oh, how I should like to contribute a good stroke with a pickaxe!"

In 1787, when twenty-five years of age, he becomes an advocate. Three years thereafter he marries Mademoiselle Charpentier, the daughter of a controller of revenue-collectors, received with her a dowry of forty thousand francs, with which sum, and about a similar amount in addition which he had inherited from his deceased father, he buys the post of a king's counsellor, for previous to the Revolution all places of advocature and magistracy were bought and sold.

This is the position we find him in, and his age thirty, when the Revolution breaks out. He lives in rigid economy, but decently, in small apartments near his father-in-law, in the Cour de Commerce, a narrow street on the south side of the Seine, in that district of the Cordeliers which is to be so well known later on in the Revolution. He has but a few, but very intimate friends, among members of the bar and literary men, who visit each other very much. He is a most excellent family-man, and loves his wife dearly, who in return loves him, finds him not at all ugly, and has a firm belief in his powers and future when no one else has.

He is described at that time as a Hercules in build, needing a well-turned-down collar in which to move his bull-neck; his bodily figure stately as well as massive, and himself more careful in his dress than has been generally thought. His voice is powerful, and his gestures are bold. He is hot-tempered, easily moved to anger, terrible to an adversary, but easy also to conciliate.

It is shameful, that, on the word of a woman like Madame Roland, the notion should have got currency that Danton was illiterate! he whom we have seen as a king's counsellor; he whom we now know to have been counsel to a secretary of justice, M. Barentin, who thought so well of him that he twice offered him the position of secretary of seals, which offer he twice refused, and who repeatedly consulted him on most important public measures, and once requested of him and obtained from him a memorandum as to the most urgent reforms to be laid before the king!

And we have further evidence. On the death of Danton's first wife, in February, 1793, an inventory was, according to French law, taken of his possessions. This inventory shows, that, while he then had a lot of silver-plate valued at twelve hundred and two francs, he possessed, on the other hand, a library composed of more than one hundred works, many composed of several volumes, valued at sixteen hundred francs more than the silver-plate. Among the books we find the works of Plutarch in English, of Montesquieu, of Montaigne, of Voltaire, of Rabelais, of Buffon, of Dr. Johnson in English, of Rousseau, Robertson's *History of America* in English, the whole *Encyclopædia*, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* in English, etc.

From this we can see that Danton read English, and, indeed, preferred English translations of the classics. We know he read Italian works in the original; we know that when, a second time, he had caught a fever from bathing, he, while convalescing, read all the volumes of the *Encyclopædia* through; we know he studied Montesquieu particularly, from whose "Spirit of Laws" he often quoted; he read all the works of Rousseau, of course, as everybody did; Beccaria's *Crimes and Punishments*, which appeared just before the Revolution, and which was soon to reform the criminal legislation of the civilized world, he studied with care.

At the age of thirty, Danton then really stood at the summit of the knowledge of his age. He had drunk deeply the lessons from the revolutionary books of his age. The Revolution had matured in his brain, as in the brains of the reading portion of his contemporaries, and it was now ready to be born. That Danton was aware of this, seems evident from the answer he gave to M. Barentin, when offering him office for the second time: "I thank you, but the state of politics has changed entirely. We are no longer in the period of modest reforms; they who refused these, refused their own salvation. *Now we are at the dawn of a revolution.*"

But that he was going to be such an important actor was hidden from everybody's eyes, and so it was, indeed, with all the other revolutionary actors. Sieyès, Mirabeau, Vergniaud, Guadet, Roland, Robespierre, Carnot, Danton, were hidden in a night of obscurity, and that, perhaps, saved them for their days of action.

* * *

Do not let us forget, however, that the middle classes were ready too, — the rich middle classes that are to be the bearers of the new ideas and rulers of the new era, because they are the only part of the masses as yet sufficiently developed. They had become rich, proud, and powerful, compared to the "lower classes," from the time Colbert had, under Louis XIV., worked for them sixteen hours a day during twenty-two years, with his tariffs, his custom-house regulations, and his commercial negotiations. But just as powerful as they were in regard to the masses, just as impotent were they in regard to nobles and clergy, who openly and on every occasion insulted them.

An attempt had already been made to effect the Revolution from above. Turgot became minister shortly after Louis' accession. It was the philosophers, the economists, come to power, convinced that now their ideas were to receive a brilliant application. Turgot, with the assistance of Malesherbes, immediately attempted to give the middle classes freer movement by a decisive blow: the principle of free competition was to govern in industry and commerce. The Paris "Parliament" — the magistracy was so called in France — was compelled to register a decree for the free circulation of grain, and also an edict abolishing all corporations and guilds. That was on the 12th of March, 1776, the year of publication of the *Wealth of Nations*. On that day, Louis Blanc tells us, the workmen of Paris left their masters in crowds, and celebrated their emancipation by processions through the streets, and banquets in the evening. Ah, the time came when they were undeceived, and learned that "free competition" did not at all mean freedom for them! But their masters were not yet to be emancipated either, for there immediately was a re-action. Turgot fell from power, and the guilds and all other restrictions were left as before. Now we can see how short-sighted the ruling powers were; how much better it would have been for them and France if the Revolution could have been carried out from above. But then, how much more short-sighted are not *our* ruling classes, who scorn even to listen to suggestions made in our days for inaugurating the Coming Revolution from above!

So the middle classes of France were still waiting, but ready.

The American war gave a mighty push to events. Curiously enough, it is the "Parliaments" that first demand the assembling of the *States-General;* then everybody demands them. Only "Anglomania" can explain this universal cry for them; for though the "States-General" had met several times before in French history, and at crises too, the last time they assembled had been a hundred and seventy-five years before, and they never had possessed a trace of political significance. Saint-Simon — not the reformer, but the historian of Louis XIV. — contemptuously says, "The States-General are never seriously effective; *verba, voces!* (words, voices!), nothing more. But *they are an expedient for canonizing bankruptcy*, at once innocent, agreeable, and easy."

There is, by the way, a letter from Mirabeau, written to a friend at Strasbourg about this time, which has not been long known, in which he says, "Let us not undertake too much. Let us insist on our consent to all taxes and loans, civil liberty, and periodical assemblies, as the three capital points. The rest will come in its own good time. And now I shall give my private thoughts to you in confidence: *War to all privileges and privileged parties,* — that is my motto. That is why I am personally in favor of monarchy. That would be a nice republic we should have, composed of all the powerful and rich who now are on top of us! Why, it would be the most acute tyranny! The members should be numerous. Eight hundred members are easier to lead than three hundred, and *there will always be some dexterous persons to lead the herd,* however large it is."

At last the King calls the States-General together. Representatives of the three orders, Nobility, Clergy, and Commons, are to meet at Versailles in May, 1789. By an additional decree it is ordered that the Third Estate, the Commons, are to have twice as many representatives as the other orders; they are to be elected by what is virtually universal suffrage. This additional decree is published New Year's Day, 1789, and the Parisians illuminate their houses in consequence, as after a victory. It was the first time in history that a large nation, with twenty-five million people, had tried such an experiment. No wonder that the next months witnessed a great deal of excitement in France.

But is it not remarkable to observe how, in spite of all excitement, the assemblies of the Third Estate seem everywhere to be of one mind and one heart? Everywhere the same proceedings: *cahiers,* or "platforms" as we call them in America, are drawn up, and these *cahiers* are all of the same tenor; *all re-echo the demands of the revolutionary writers* mentioned above: —

"The sovereignty resides in the people, and should be exercised only by the nation's representatives, in accord with the King.

"We demand a constitution and laws, to be made and adopted by the States-General, who also should have the exclusive right to vote the taxes and control the national expenditures.

"The agents of the executive power must be made responsible.

"The privileges of nobility and clergy should be abolished.

"Serfdom should be abolished.

"All citizens to be eligible to all public employments.

"The procedure of courts of justice should be reformed, the purchase and sale of all law-offices abolished, and justice to be gratuitous; also exceptional jurisdictions abolished.

"The press should be free, and each left to practise whatever religion he pleases.

"*Industry and commerce should be entirely free.*"

These were the propositions that the revolutionary writers had made the middle classes believe, and believe in like a veritable gospel; they had made them the *convictions* of the middle classes, for which these were ready to sacrifice every thing and everybody, themselves included, if need be.

The States-General met the 5th of May, 1789. All historians start the French Revolution from that date. There is not the slightest reason for this. That meeting was merely an incident in the course of events, like so many other incidents. The Revolution came about, was born, in a moment — which is soon approaching; but if we are to say when its preparation commenced, then the year 1748 is the date.

The three orders go each to its different hall of assembling, but the Third Estate, the Commons, refuse to do any business at all; they even refuse to open letters addressed to "the Third Estate." They merely say, "We are waiting to have the two other orders come to us, in order that we may form one assembly;" and they repeatedly notify Nobility and Clergy to that effect. But these will not come. The Commons remain doggedly obstinate. The Paris electors have been very dilatory in electing their representatives; at last it is done, and on the 25th of May the twenty Parisian deputies, headed by Bailly and Sieyès, enter the hall of the Commons. The Commons still wait; but finally, on June 10, their patience is at an end. Then, among an immense concourse of spectators, and in the midst of a profound silence, rises Abbé Sieyès, of the Parisian delegation, to become the *accoucheur* of the Revolution. He makes the motion that final summons be addressed to the other orders to the effect that the calling of the bailiwicks will commence in an hour. Adopted. After the lapse of the hour the Commons commence the verification of their powers; and in this business they are engaged the following days, during which several of the lower clergy enter to take their place among them. Finally, *on June 17*, Sieyès, again, proposes *that they constitute themselves* THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, and that decisive step is adopted by 491 against 90. They then elect Bailly president, and immediately thereafter proceed to an act of sovereignty, by decreeing that *no taxes be valid in the future without their consent.*

NOW THE REVOLUTION IS BORN.

It has been the fashion of historians to call Mirabeau the "father," the "maker," of the French Revolution. In truth no individual was its father; but if anybody, it was certainly not Mirabeau, but Sieyès. Mirabeau opposed himself to the title of "National Assembly," precisely because the two other orders were not present; he wanted the Commons to call themselves, instead, the "Representatives of the French People." It would be interesting to know if he was among the ninety who voted "no," but I have not been able to ascertain this. But this we know, — that on his deathbed Mirabeau said to the Genevese Dumont: "O my friend! how right we were when we endeavored, from the first, to prevent the Commons from declaring themselves the National Assembly! It is this that *has been the source of all our evils*. From the moment they carried that victory, they have never ceased to show themselves unworthy of it."

The court tries all manner of means to frighten the National Assembly back from the stand they have taken,—excludes them from their own hall, and compels them to take refuge first in a tennis-court (where they take their celebrated oath to stick together), then in the Church of St. Louis; and finally the King, in royal session, on June 23, commands them to recede. But all in vain.

It is at this royal session that an incident occurs that has thrown a good deal of false glamour around Mirabeau. The King has left; so have the nobles and most of the clergy; the Commons, "the National Assembly," remain,—when enters the King's usher, who reminds them of the King's command. Then Mirabeau haughtily replies, "We are here by the people's will, and nothing but bayonets shall make us leave." The fact is, no one thought of leaving; and Bailly, the president, was just on the point of saying so.

Two days after the clergy give in; and on June 27 the nobility, by command of the King, likewise join the Assembly.

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Now the middle classes of France, being in a clear majority of the National Assembly, are in supreme power, and they know its value. They know—and they have left it to us as an important lesson—that a revolutionary body *must get hold of political power as an instrument*, or else they will get into collision with it as an obstacle.

The people cried, "The Revolution is finished; it is the work of the philosophers, and it has not cost a drop of blood." Our historians have pitied these people their near-sightedness. Yet it is the historians that are near-sighted. The people were right.

The Revolution WAS *accomplished*, and *not a blow had been struck, not a particle of violence committed,* so far. The middle classes were in political power, and they knew that the rest would follow as a matter of course.

It *did* follow very soon after, as a matter of course.

And the people shouted for joy. They even called out the Queen, whom they hated; she appeared on the balcony, and showed them the dauphin.

The middle classes can now commence singing *their* revolutionary song: —

"Ah, ça ira, ça ira, ça ira!
La liberty s'établira
Malgré les tyrans; tout réussira."

("It goes! It gets on splendidly!
Liberty will be established
In spite of tyrants; all will succeed.")

CHAPTER II.

THE MIDDLE-CLASS RÉGIME.

June 27, 1789, to Sept. 30, 1791.

> "*You, plutocrats! were appointed to guard against gluts, appointed to preside over the distribution and apportionment of wages for work done, that our human laws be emblems of God's laws.*" — CARLYLE.

THE COUNTER-REVOLUTION. — AUG. 4. — THE CONSTITUTION OF '91. — DANTON THE FIRST REPUBLICAN. — THE DOINGS OF THE FRENCH BOURGEOISIE.

BUT what about the violence, the massacres, the Terror? Ah! they do not belong to the Revolution; they, indeed, are diametrically opposed to the Revolution, however much historians persist in including them, and in even making the French Revolution principally consist in them. As a matter of fact, these horrors were the natural outcome of the frantic efforts of the old powers to overthrow the new *régime*, and bring back the old *régime*, — of the *counter-Revolution to undo the Revolution.* Historians are right in insisting upon that something failed, but it was the counter-Revolution that miserably failed at every step it took.

Just here comes in a notable difference between England and France. Charles, undoubtedly, fought personally till the very last ditch, and paid the penalty for his stubbornness; but the nobility gave way as soon as the danger-point was reached, and ever since have done so. This, indeed, has become such a characteristic of the British aristocracy, that it is constantly relied upon by the people; and woe if this reliance shall ever prove false!

In the English Revolution the nobility gave way, and allied themselves with the new-comers in a joint empire. The aristocracy said, in effect, to the rich manufacturers and merchants, "We will divide our power with you;" and so they became, jointly, pretty severe taskmasters to the toiling masses. This prudent conduct on the part of the British nobility is the reason why to-day we find the anomaly in Great Britain of the lands in the hands of the few, and of the survival of so many other feudal features.

Such was the beginning of the political power of the rich middle classes of England. They have gone on consolidating all the groups of well-to-do people of former periods, — of people of property, such as country squires, big farmers, capitalists, shopkeepers, and professional men, — and made them all so conscious of their interdependence, that they very naturally have come to look upon those with whom they have no social intercourse as "the lower classes," who seem to be there only to be used as instruments for their own well-being.

These same classes have, on the other hand, now acquired such complete dominion, that (since large bodies always attract and absorb smaller ones) they have absolutely swallowed up the upper classes, and made them mere adjuncts to themselves.

The nobility in England is now a part of the middle classes; is, like them, engaged in "business," one way or another, and would be of no importance without such business. This transition has been effected so much the more easily, as the English aristocracy never formed a class apart, as in France; that is to say, the heads alone of the noble families have political privileges, while all their other members are simple "commoners."

I have no doubt that this slow, peaceful way of passing from feudal times over into our modern era, this slow way of making what is, in truth, the British *Constitution*, has, on the whole, been a great blessing to the British people.

But in France it was quite otherwise. Its Revolution was so dramatic, precisely because its ruling powers had not sense or inclination to abdicate or divide their power when the time came for it. It had to be wrenched from them.

Yet I am not sure that they ought to be very much blamed for it. This disposition of theirs was certainly a very unfortunate one for themselves and for France; but it should be borne in mind that they merely obeyed an hereditary instinct in trying to save the Catholic feudal system, which, though at the time anti-social, was in their eyes the only anchor of safety for their cherished principles, interests, and institutions. They were simply inveterate bigots; for *bigotry* is in essence an incapacity to understand the law of development, and a disposition to kick against it.

But this furnishes a ready answer to those who think that the Revolution was wicked and sinful. Why, if any thing was *wicked* and "sinful," it was certainly the counter-Revolution, and not the Revolution. The latter may have possessed some ignoble features. They who led it and they who prepared it may, many of them, have been very unlovely characters, — that I do not deny. The plutocrats certainly contributed to the violence by their rapacity and selfishness, the masses did by their suspicion and cruelty. But I insist on this: that the Revolution did the will of the Intelligence that directs human events. *The counter-Revolution opposed **that will**:* that made it "sinful" in a truly religious sense; and the further fact that this opposition was essentially egoistic, made it *wicked.*

This resistance by the re-actionary forces of France was so terrific, violating without scruple one of the most sacred of the sentiments of that day, — patriotism, — that it required immense, herculean efforts on the part of the patriots to overcome it. Hence the delirium, the hysterics of the Parisians. *Hence the massacres.* HENCE THE TERROR.

Note this other important point, — that precisely this terrific resistance of the counter-Revolution, together with its complete failure, did immensely set in relief the success of the Revolution. The resistance had very much the same effect that enclosure has on powder: it made the Revolution march so much the quicker, and its victories so much the more decisive. This, precisely, enabled France to reach in a few years the stage which it had taken Great Britain a century and a half to attain, and even to go beyond it.

By joining the two ideas, — of the Revolution as the decree of evolution, and of the counter-Revolution as opposing this decree, — we get a key to the totality of those events known as "the French Revolution." To overlook the counter-Revolution entirely is like a sculptor who should make, instead of two fighting gladiators, only one: that one, instead of being a gladiator, straining every nerve for a purpose, would appear simply a lunatic; and that is, indeed, what historians have made the French people out to be.

We meet with the counter-Revolution at the very threshold. The exuberant tone of joy, confidence, and hopefulness, yes, the *modesty* of the people, on all occasions at the beginning of the Revolution, are responded to by the court by the very opposite feelings.

The first chapter clsoed with the people cheering the Queen, and the Queen smiling on the people; but at that very moment she did another thing which the people did not see, — she sent for troops.

It closed with the Nobility joining the National Assembly at the express command of the court. The very next morning the court repented, and appealed to force. They surrounded first the National Assembly, and then Paris, with foreign troops, — Swiss, Germans, and Tyrolese. This naturally excited in everybody a suspicion that the court intended to dissolve the Assembly, overawe Paris, and with one blow restore the old order of things, as now we know were, in fact, its intentions.

The response to this threat was the storming of the Bastille by the people of Paris on the 14th of July, the day which the third French Republic has proclaimed a national holiday, and now for a good many years has celebrated as such.

Oh, well may the French well-to-do middle classes, whose republic this third French Republic is, celebrate the day, for it set the seal on their previous victory. They have reaped all the substantial benefits of the day, and yet their personal share in the taking of the Bastille was very small. They had come to the conclusion that the "lower classes," with beating, suffering, hoping hearts in their bosoms, were excellent "masses" wherewith to blow down Bastilles, and so they egged them on. But one thing they forgot, — that precisely in that way did they teach these masses their strength and the use of brute force.

Well, the Bastille was overthrown in broad daylight, just as a rock is buried by the rolling waves of the ocean.

But the spirit of the plutocrats was odiously displayed right thereafter, when the committee of citizens appointed to preserve order, and who had appointed Bailly mayor of Paris, *forbade the poor to wear the patriotic cockade under pain of arrest.* It was the wedge entering for the first time between middle classes and the working-classes.

Three days thereafter, Louis, who fifteen years before had been crowned king by the grace of God, now suffered himself, in a hypocritic fashion, to be re-crowned king by the grace of the middle classes. After hearing mass — to prepare himself for the worst — he arrived from Versailles at the barrier of Paris at three in the afternoon, drove between two lines of silent, determined men to the Hôtel de Ville (the town-hall), ascended its staircase under a canopy of steel made (after the manner of Free-Masons, but unfamiliar to him) by swords placed crosswise, received from the hands of Bailly, the mayor, the new tricolor national cockade, which he placed in his hat, and showed himself from the balcony to the crowd below, — a middle-class king.

Now the plutocrats, the French *bourgeoisie*, can certainly sing from one end of France to the other, "*Ah, ça ira!*" — "it goes merrily!"

But the Queen, on going to meet the King on his return to Versailles, and seeing the national cockade still in his hat, contemptuously exclaims, "I did not know I had married a plebeian." And princes of the blood flee the country: this is the beginning of what will be known as the Emigration, the most sinister form of the counter-Revolution. Instead of bravely staying at their posts, at court, in the Assembly, in the administrative offices, and, since they will not compromise with the Revolution, at least honestly fighting it out amongst themselves, they give up all at home, like cowards, to call on the hated foreigners for assistance.

* * *

Since the foundation of the new *régime* is already laid, *the crash can now come:* the feudal system can now be torn down with safety, and with ease as well.

To accomplish this, the *bourgeoisie* wrought, further, in the raw material at hand, the masses, all over the country. The peasants were set in motion, fagots in hand, with which they set fire to the castles of the nobility; not so much, however, with the intention of destroying the buildings as — on the admission of the nobles themselves — to do away with the *title-deeds*, which were the evidence of the feudal burdens resting so heavily on them and on agriculture.

This violence brought on the unexampled night of *Aug. 4*. It is noteworthy that Mirabeau, the alleged "maker" of the

Revolution, did not contribute any thing to this the *second* step in the great change, either. He was absent; those present turned their eyes in the direction of his seat, and, seeing it vacant, wondered. But afterwards he who had declared his motto to be "War to all privileges and privileged," called that sitting a "delirium of suicide."

Yes, it was a delirium, but one of which, to some extent, humanity has reason to be proud. For, even after making every allowance for the fright caused by the agitation of the peasants, there were certainly some noble minds who that night were moved by the great, generous ideas of the century, and gave practical proofs of it by great sacrifices — principal among these the first speaker, the Duke d'Aiguillon.

I sometimes delight in fancying another picture, — one representing, at the time Garrison's anti-slavery agitation was at its height, some of the slave-barons of the Southern States of America, in a similar fit of patriotic enthusiasm, rising in their seats in Congress, and freely relinquishing slavery! What sufferings might such act have spared to themselves, their class, and the nation!

For here in that most memorable of sittings of which the history of assemblies has preserved a remembrance, which lasted from eight in the evening till two in the morning, the representatives of the privileged classes arose, one after the other, and in a fever of generosity renounced one privilege, one right, after another: *one the pension of which he was in receipt, another the fees to which he was entitled as a magistrate; some absolutely beggaring themselves*, but most of them, undoubtedly, doing, from what was real compulsion, that which was much easier, — donating to the nation other people's property. The fanatical resistance, then, which has been spoken of above, concerned not so much their personal privileges, for that night *there was no discussion, and no need for any;* the prevailing enthusiasm was born of a profound conviction that the moment had come to put an end to these: it was the abolition of the privileges of their monarchy and their church, it was the supremacy of the middle classes, that aroused their unreasoning opposition.

And so, when the session closed, they had abolished all the feudal burdens that rested on the peasants and on agriculture, as the tithes, the duty of the latter to grind their corn at their landlords' mill, the duty to work on the highways, the right of the chase, etc.; furthermore, the guilds and all burdens on industry, including the provincial custom-houses; then inequalities in taxation, the purchase and sale of judicial offices, and many other ancient abuses.

My readers, aware that in our Legislatures a bill must be read a first, second, and third time before it can become a law, may ask in wonder how all these changes could possibly be accomplished in one short session. They must then know that in these first French assemblies all artificial barriers on legislation were unknown. A member had only, as in this session of the 4th of August, to make a motion embodying a principle, and have it, as here, adopted by acclamation. To be sure, the details had then to be worked out afterwards, but that was more particularly the work of committees; while the submission of the finished bill to the Assembly, and adoption by it, were often but mere forms, though it, of course, took time, and therefore it lasted many months before the measures of that celebrated night were finally realized. It is important to bear the above in mind, in order to understand how, later on, Danton was able, by a simple motion, to have adopted the stern and far-reaching revolutionary measures of which he became the author.

When the French people awoke the next morning, they really found themselves in a perfectly new society. *Individualism was now triumphant.* But let me again insist on this, — for it contains a most important lesson for us, — that the old system fell when it was fully ripe, and when, so to say, it had to fall of itself, and *not before the foundation of the new system had been laid.* The philosopher Quinet, by the way, has curious ideas on this subject. He says, "If Frenchmen had simply wished for material improvement and civil equality, the Revolution would have ended here. But what I most admire is the small impression these sacrifices made on people's minds. I deem it to the eternal honor of the men of '89 that they were not satisfied with these things, if *liberty were not added.*"

Why, what more "liberty" did they want, or could they have? Here the people's representatives were making the most radical changes, according to their own sweet will, and taking the king's consent for granted, or — immaterial!

As to the "small impression on the people's mind," let us see. Whom did these changes benefit?

First, the peasants were undoubtedly benefited. The shackles were struck from French agriculture by its being relieved from the terribly oppressive feudal burdens, and, as a consequence, it attained, at a bound as it were, a most remarkable development, justifying all the Encyclopædists had claimed and foretold. Further, the equalization of taxation was an immense boon to the peasants, who hitherto had paid the by far largest portion of the taxes. These were great benefits, but these were all the benefits the peasants derived from the Revolution, and, mark, those peasants only who possessed some land.

Next, industry was greatly benefited. For the night of Aug. 4 realized all the economic demands made by the writers of the *Encyclopædia;* to wit, freedom of action, freedom of competition, and unrestricted private enterprise: and the consequence was, that industry, likewise, attained a steadily growing development.

But this benefited only the middle classes; that is to say, only those who owned raw materials and means of production. But the masses, the poor, the workers who possessed nothing but their labor? They, whether in town or country, were not benefited at all.

True, they now became free as to their persons and their actions; as far as the *bourgeoisie* had secured that much of liberty for them, it represented the whole people, and had raised the masses with itself. But was this done from sympathy with the masses? Not at all. The plutocrats had done it because it was absolutely essential to themselves as a class; because the new mode of industry and agriculture required that workmen and laborers should be able to migrate from places where their labor was not wanted, to places where it was. How far the interests of the masses were from the minds of the *bourgeoisie*, is shown by the fact, that when, during the same sitting of Aug. 4, Malouet, moved by an inspiration that should honor his memory, entreated his colleagues to consider the lot of the laboring classes, and *establish workshops for those who were out of work*, a general murmur arose, and — they passed on to other matters.

On the one hand, how much their own interests were present to their minds, is shown in a striking manner by the subject of the tithes. There was hardly any thing that pressed so heavily on agriculture as these tithes, and therefore one of the most important achievements of Aug. 4 had been their abolition, in principle, but *against a ransom*. A few days after, a bill with the details worked out is presented to the Assembly for its sanction, which bill abolished the tithes, *without any compensation whatsoever*. Then Abbé Sieyès stood up and did just the right thing. He objected to it as different in principle from what was resolved the other night. He pointed out that these tithes had been levied to afford a living to the lower clergy, and, to a very large extent, to support the poor; that, indeed, the *tithes* *were the only poor-funds in France.* He insisted, with much energy, that to abolish the tithes, without compensation, would be robbing the poor, and making a gift outright to proprietors, who had not the least equitable title to be with one stroke relieved from paying them. No matter! Let the poor be robbed, said the Assembly, virtually, in ordering that a splendid gift of a yearly revenue of twenty-five million dollars, and more than twice that amount in our money, should be made to *property-holders.*

I shall here remark that Danton, who, I contend, was generally in the right, made a most unjust attack on Sieyès for his action in this matter, and claimed that he, the "priest," had defended the tithes, and in doing so had considered nothing but the interests of his order. But Sieyès had done no such thing: he defended the interests of the poor. He did not oppose himself to the abolition of the tithes, but to the non-compensation clause.

If, therefore, the sacrifices of Aug. 4 had made little impression on the minds of the masses, it would have been no wonder. It was the middle classes for whom things had succeeded splendidly, and who could sing "*Ça ira!*" with more unction than ever.

But soon a great event occurs that shows that the Parisian masses had nevertheless been sufficiently impressed never to allow the Revolution to be undone. For, when some weeks had passed, the counter-Revolution raises its head again. They want to carry Louis off to Metz, and from there commence a civil war in whose abyss the Revolution shall disappear. The arrival of a loyal regiment from Flanders at Versailles gives officer-conspirators opportunity to meet at banquets, which the King and Queen attend, and where the national cockade is trodden under foot, and revenge is sworn. News of this spreads among the Parisians. This is the occasion when Danton for the first time enters actively into the Revolution. He causes his club to issue a rousing call on the people to march on Versailles. The Parisians do march, first the women of the market-halls, and then the men, and, by gentle but very effective persuasions, succeed in taking back with them to Paris the royal family, whom they lodge in the palace of the Tuileries. From this time Paris — then a city of eight hundred thousand inhabitants — becomes the central theatre of action.

These strange proceedings take place on the 6th of October, 1789, and have far-reaching effects, for they robbed royalty of all its nimbus in the eyes of Frenchmen —*forever*. More than that. We have hitherto found the Parisian population very, very *modest;* even the *bourgeoisie* was so at first. But now that modesty, also, vanishes ; that is to say, in the working-class as a body, *in corpore*. All through the Revolution they remain self-distrustful as individuals.

Already, after the "delirium of suicide," a great many nobles had followed the example of the princes of the blood ; now, after the 6th of October, there is a perfect exodus of nobles and priests.

Another circumstance that shows that the masses were really "impressed" by the course of the Revolution so far, is the joyful, confident, and enthusiastic mood of the people on all occasions now and for some time yet to come, and which contrasts so wonderfully with the spirit that shall take possession of them three years hence.

The King, some time during the following February, takes it into his head to pay a visit to his National Assembly, which has followed the royal family to Paris, and holds its sittings in a riding-school near the palace. He comes informally, and this simple circumstance so affects all its members, that they fall into each other's arms and swear fidelity to the fatherland. Paris, when she hears of it, is affected in the same manner, and takes up the cry, "We swear!" and the whole country follows suit, so that for three whole weeks all France resounds with the cry, "We all swear!"

But it is when the first anniversary of the taking of the Bastille comes round that this enthusiasm reaches its height.

National guards from the departments swarmed into Paris. Platforms for the patriots were being constructed in the Champ de Mars, a huge open space almost in the centre of Old Paris. Then it was rumored that fifteen thousand workmen were not sufficient to finish the work in time. A simultaneous impulse moved the entire population of Paris at the report, and soon there was an ant-hill of a hundred and fifty thousand workmen, trundling wheelbarrows and digging the ground in a workshop forty thousand yards in width, and whose length went clean beyond sight.

Every district, every corporation, every family, was represented there. Drums were beating, bands were playing; women and children come on, three abreast, with spades on their shoulders, singing the new song, "*Ça ira!*" Old men and women aided in erecting the "altar of the country," — the altar on which to take the civil oath, the oath of liberty and equality. Collegians, schoolboys, students of the Academy of Painting and of the Veterinary School, market-porters, "who are as good as the strong men of Israel," printers, — those of Prudhomme decorated with his paper, *Les Révolutions de Paris* — charcoal-burners who had quitted their living sepulchres, and were asking in bewilderment, "What is this for a psalm, '*Ça ira*'?" Women laughed and danced around bewildered monks. Swiss guards, French guards, market-women, and court ladies were all there. The King came, and they applauded him. Lafayette came, and he was applauded even more than the King. All was confidence and fraternity during these blissful hours. Not a theft took place. Marquises removed their gloves to shake hand with coal-porters.

The following night was passed by great numbers on the

Champ de Mars. Multitudes were up with sunrise. Furious rain-storms arose; but in the teeth of the wind, and under the lash of the rain, the folks from Auvergne danced their *bourrée*, and the Provençals their *farandoles*. Immense rings of dancers were formed. "Look at these Frenchmen, dancing while the rain is falling in torrents," said astonished foreigners.[1]

After the taking of the civic oath by the King and the high functionaries, followed beating of drums, firing of guns, waving of swords, shouts of triumph, tossing of hats into the air. All were drunk with enthusiasm. One unanimous cry issued from the lips of six hundred thousand Frenchmen: "France is free! we swear it!" Fathers held up the hands of their little children.

And the site of the Bastille was turned into an artificial wood, in which large trees were lighted up, and adorned with pikes and Phrygian caps, and with the famous inscription, "Dancing here."

No wonder that Frenchmen of to-day are seriously debating whether, in the monument of the Revolution soon to be erected, they should not immortalize this great "Festival of the Federation," as it was called, rather than the taking of the Bastille.

And is it not evident from this, that all the horrors that followed might very well have been avoided? that, indeed, they would never have occurred if the court party had but philosophically accepted the handwriting on the wall, like their English brethren, and even if the nobles had not been such dastards as to lead a foreign foe against their fatherland?

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So far we have seen the National Assembly only destructive, clearing the way for the dominion of the plutocracy. Now we shall see the same Assembly organizing, upbuilding, that dominion, it goes without saying. In that character it is known in history as *the Constituent Assembly*, constituting the political constitution of France, a work that took it fully two years.

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[1] This description is taken from Camille's newspaper, *Revolutions of France and Brabant.*

In that capacity it had very much to do, indeed. Part of this it did very well; some of its work was of doubtful value.

Let us bear in mind that all the old institutions were virtually razed to the ground; all was *tabula rasa*. They had to rebuild even the whole administrative and governmental machinery. In this work they could do about as they pleased: there was no power strong enough to hinder them, and no doubt they wanted to do the best they knew.

But the mischief was, that they did not know, and could not know, what really was best to do. Their views were naturally very narrow, because their horizon was limited. As a matter of fact, they had destroyed one social order, and were to prepare for a new social order, separated from them by several generations; but how could they know that? How could they know that the actual institutions which they themselves were going to erect were, in the nature of things, merely to be temporary, transitional; so to speak, but a scaffolding for the coming social order?

All the ideas they had were those which the thinkers of the preceding generation, and more particularly Montesquieu, Diderot, and Rousseau had inoculated them with, — the same ideas that filled the heads of the whole of their own generation; the ideas that were embodied in the *cahiers*, or platforms, on which they had been elected. Further, they had, besides these ideas, an example, a model, before their eyes, — that of England. And lastly, and really most important in determining the character of the work they had to do, this fact, that they all belonged to the well-to-do middle classes.

The Assembly was a middle-class assembly; its armed force was the National Guard, all middle-class men; their mayor, Bailly, who controlled the popular forces of Paris, was a middle-class man. In the nature of things, therefore, they did not and would not labor for the multitude, but for men of property; that is to say, men *with superfluities*. The "liberty" they had in mind was the liberty of men with superfluities; the "equality" they meant, the equality of men with superfluities.

Upon the whole, they were placed about in the same position as the Constitutional Convention of the United States, which had met a couple of years before, with Washington for presiding officer: but their field of action was much broader, and they had much freer hands; and I should say they did their work about equally well. It must be acknowledged that in this sphere on which we now are entering Mirabeau was the acknowledged leader, and his influence and activity were pre-eminent.

First, then, they divided France into communes, districts, and departments; they made all magistrates elective; they instituted justices of the peace and juries; they reformed, much for the better, the civil and criminal laws, abolished torture, and equalized punishments; they suppressed all religious orders, and abolished all titles of nobility; they established unity of money, weights, and measures all over France; they reformed the army, making it truly *national*, and every one of its functions open to all; and most important, as absolutely essential to a *capitalist* era, they established the legality of *lending money out on interest*, — a measure by which the operations of the money market received their first legal sanction!

Well, now the Revolution is really *complete*.

For now the three great middle-class principles are fully established in the laws; these, to wit, FREE COMPETITION, Equality before the Law, and The Unity of the State. These are three great principles, while "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" are really but phrases. Moreover, these are the great *revolutionary principles* which Frenchmen mean, and are so proud of, when they talk of their "Revolution;" and these three principles have never been called in question, from the Constituent Assembly to our days.

Certainly there cannot, then, be a doubt about this, — that the French Revolution must be pronounced a success.

But they had other important things to do. They had to save France from bankruptcy, to bring order into the finances. They succeeded admirably in doing this, and almost instantly. A sole measure did it, — the confiscation of the landed property of the Church.

We already have seen the tithes confiscated for the benefit of property-holders; now the rest of the clergy's property, representing an annual revenue of more than fifteen million dollars, is — not "confiscated," for Mirabeau manages to substitute this phrase, "*placed at the disposition of the nation*." By the means of paper money, *assignats*, first issued April 16, 1790, based on this ecclesiastical property, the new *régime* was put on an excellent financial footing. As "compensation," the State took upon itself to pay, for the future, the functionaries of the Church yearly salaries, and thereby thought to have accomplished a second grand stroke of policy, — that of having placed the Church under the civil authority.

But, in truth, looked upon from the stand-point of their own interests, this whole business was really a very poor expedient.

Because they thereby saved themselves the necessity of *going into their own pockets for the means* of paying the public debt, — and that was their leading motive for confiscating the Church property, — these "defenders of property" had not the least scruple of laying violent hands on the property of a corporation that Voltaire and Diderot had taught them to hate, — did so, indeed, with enthusiasm. They certainly might have seen that they were attacking "property" in its very origin. They taught others the lesson, that, as it is *society that sanctions property*, *society may*, by its constituted authorities, *remove that sanction*. Could they not see, that, by the stroke they wielded, they fashioned a most powerful precedent against themselves?

Lastly, they had to frame a new form of government.

Here they had an acknowledged master to teach them what to do. Montesquieu had distinctly placed before them the British Constitution as the one they had to copy. They all agreed about that, and both he and they were undoubtedly right there. England had, many years before, travelled the same road they were travelling, and had now successfully accomplished her journey and her task. But *what portions of that constitution were they to copy?* That was the great, bewildering question. Montesquieu, the great empiricist, had particularly told them, it may be remembered, to copy the *division of powers*. Finally, they seem to have come to the conclusion, led by Mirabeau and Lafayette, that they would try to copy, like their American brethren, the whole thing, from top to bottom, in every detail, as far as they could.

They tell a story of the Chinese to the effect that once some wooden huts burned down, containing several hogs. A Chinaman happened to taste these hogs, and his experience introduced roast pork to the Chinese. They liked it; but for a long time after, they were under the impression, that the only way of procuring the delicacy was to build wooden huts, put hogs into them, and then set fire to them.

That is really the way that the middle classes of Europe and America have gone to work to secure the blessings of the British Constitution to themselves.

Why was the British Constitution a good model for America and France? Because it secured to the middle classes unquestioned dominion. But what was it in the Constitution that secured this end? *The parliamentary system*, and that *solely; that* part, then, it was they had to copy. But they go on, and want, further, two chambers, a constitutional king, — or something that looked as much as possible like a king, — and, of course, the division of powers among three departments, legislative, executive, and judicial; though these features in the British Constitution are merely the *outcome of the compromise* which we saw was made between the aristocracy and plutocracy.

Well, the United States went the whole length. We adopted the two-chamber system, and have, in imitation of the Chinese in the fable, carried it to the ridiculous length that our subordinate "States" at the present day must also each have its "lower" house and "upper" house, though *both are named by the same electors*. We adopted the system of three co-ordinate powers, so that daily laws are so beautifully made in one spirit, executed in a second, and interpreted in a third spirit; but that gives "business" to lawyers. Lastly, since we have no person of royal blood out of whom to make a real king, we had to be satisfied with a "dress-coat" imitation.

France, for the time being, was saved from the two-chamber system and the worst effects of the division of powers, mainly by the pressure exercised by the Parisians, who, again, were mainly influenced by Danton, but only after a hard struggle.

But the Assembly committed the great blunder of retaining the monarchy, — or, at least, the blunder of retaining the Bourbons on the throne, — though they at one time had a splendid opportunity of ridding France of it. They evidently wanted a king as a shield to protect them against the masses, whom they commenced to fear. This feature, however, will be left to the following pages, for it constitutes the principal part of Danton's activity as agitator.

Yet the Constituent Assembly did the one essential thing: they established one legislative body, with sovereign authority. They took good care to secure to the middle classes exclusive authority in and over that body, by deliberately dividing the people into *bourgeoisie* and *proletariat*, into those with and those without property, giving the right of voting and sitting in the Legislature to the former class exclusively. But they committed a folly in the names they gave to these classes, in a country where words play such a great *rôle;* calling the former "active" citizens, and the latter "passive" citizens. Yet, remarkable enough, the poor citizens did not at first seem to take offence. It required some efforts by the journalists (all of them *bourgeois*, by the way), who sympathized with the masses, to teach them how odious it was to be a "passive" citizen.

In fine, the National Assembly did pretty effectually what it was sent to do: it freed from all shackles the man who suffices himself, the man who is instructed and well off, — *the plutocrat.*

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And now it is time to return to Danton. I do not claim for him any share whatever in the *making* of the Revolution, and yet it is difficult to resist the conviction that the National Assembly would hardly have gained and maintained its ascendency as easily as it did if it had not been for the support of Paris; and Paris would hardly have been so revolutionary-minded, if there had not arisen, at the right moment, in the centre of old Paris, in the so-called district of the Cordeliers (for a time called the district of the Théâtre Français) an energetic group of young patriots of whom Danton was the soul from the very first, — "the President of the Republic of the Cordeliers," as the royalists of 1791 called him.

This party of young men got their name from the meeting-place, — the Club of the Cordeliers, a part of the present Boulevard St. Germain, on the south side of the Seine. They all lived in the neighborhood of the club, liked to mingle with the people, spoke always with open doors, and often pitched their studies in the open streets. The principal members, besides Danton, were Camille Desmoulins, journalist; Fabre d'Eglantine, a successful author of plays, getting his name from having been crowned for one of them; Fréron; Chaumette; Legendre; Robert, a faithful Dantonist, and later member of the Convention from Paris: further, Momoro, the revolutionary printer; Cloots, the rich German baron, who wanted a "republic of the world;" Guzman, a *sans-culotte*[1] Spanish grandee; Marat, then forty-five years old, and the sole elderly man among them; and Hébert. With the latter ones Danton was not on the footing of personal intimacy. They possessed the three great revolutionary requisites: a thundering eloquence in Danton, who NEVER *wrote;* a slashing pen in Camille; and hot, furious enthusiasm in all. They might from the start have been compared to a regiment always under arms, as, in fact, they soon became; for they formed themselves into a company of the National Guard, with Danton as commanding officer. They, in June, 1791, invented the device, "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity."

Danton was a born tribune of the people. He had the necessary physical qualifications, — hair like a horse's mane, a gigantic stature, and a roaring voice. Over the masses he had at that time a wonderful influence, due, partly, to his warm sympathy with them, which he kept to his dying day, but greatly, also, to the fact that at that time his passions were those of the multitude. Under these circumstances, it certainly would be very strange if he was not at that time something of a demagogue. He was principally an *agitator*, and an agitator has necessarily some of the unlovely features of the demagogue. But even at this time he was wiser than all — even than Mirabeau — as to the form of government that then was required in France; and he surpassed all his contemporaries in energy of character.

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[1] *Trouserless:* first a name of contempt applied to the volunteers, because of their ragged clothes; later on adopted by the Jacobins as synonymous with *patriot*.

We have already seen Danton encouraging the Parisians to march on Versailles, and how he misrepresented Sieyès in the matter of the tithes. During the "Festival of the Federation," the representatives of the eighty-three departments sent to Paris could not well help remarking Danton, who, moreover, was present and spoke at a banquet given in their honor. In February, 1791, he was elected one of the administrators of the Department of Paris, — a sort of overseers of the municipality. It is about this time that he commenced to frequent the Club of the Jacobins.

This was the other of the celebrated Parisian clubs, was situated on the north of the Seine, and was soon going to become of overshadowing influence all over France. It had been formed by the more radical members of the Assembly, and was, in opposition to the Cordeliers, a grave parliamentary debating society. There was at that time an absolute necessity, in order to make the Revolution succeed, for such clubs, as well as for agitators. The books had only influenced the comparatively few educated persons; the agitators and popular societies had to move the hearts of the great numbers: that is the reason we soon find in every town, ay, in every village, a branch of the Jacobin Society, and each with its lesser Danton or Robespierre, according to the times, each a perfect image of the mother society. The latter sent out its cries, its resolutions, which spread themselves all over France like lightning, and in a few days were returned to Paris from these branches as an irrevocable *plebiscite,* — an expression of the will of the whole people. When Danton commenced to frequent and speak at the Jacobins, his personal friends from the Cordeliers naturally followed him. He seemed to like the society, which ended by his and his friends' becoming members of it. This proved afterwards a real misfortune to him and to France; for as a result the Club of the Cordeliers, and with it the Commune of Paris, fell into the hands of Hébert and followers, who were left behind, — that is to say, of very rough elements.

Since the day the royal family had been taken from Versailles to Paris, while the Assembly was quietly pursuing its labors, as we have seen, the King had lived quite unnoticed in his palace, except that he had taken a perfunctory part in the "Festival of the Federation."

But in April, 1791, Mirabeau dies. This death proves a far harder blow to the King than the people at that time supposed, for he had been for some time his secret adviser — for a consideration. Mirabeau gone, the King resolves upon fleeing with his family, at the first opportunity. So, a few days after, in the same month of April, the Parisians learn that the King will go to St. Cloud, for the Easter holidays. The patriots become alarmed, and suspect that this is an attempt to get out of the kingdom to put himself at the head of the emigrated princes and nobles. They, and Danton among them, attach, rightly or wrongly, great weight to keeping him in Paris. Consequently, when the King and his family are ready to leave the palace for St. Cloud on April 18, Danton appears with his Cordelier battalion, and prevents their departure by force. That bold step, of course, still more endeared him to the patriots, and increased the rage of the royalists still more against him.

At length, in the following June, 1791, the King actually succeeds in secretly leaving Paris with his family, and they are very near the frontier before they are recognized and apprehended. Great consternation, as a consequence, among all patriots. Danton is the only one among them who apparently keeps a cool head, and demands that the Assembly shall use this excellent opportunity for ridding France of royalty forever. This is the crucial point of Danton's career as agitator. He had already successfully opposed, as we have seen, the two-chamber system and the illusion of the division of powers; now he attempts to rid France of the illusion of a king.

A king is certainly of no earthly use in a parliamentary middle-class government, — the United States and France, of late, have proved that. Still, on the other hand, a monarch who will consent to remain a mere figure-head, perfectly passive, like Louis Philippe or Queen Victoria, is not of much harm. But it is not to be expected that an absolute monarch will consent to be degraded to a figure-head. There is only one instance in history, that of Frederick VII. of Denmark; but while Louis XVI. in many respects resembled that king, still his conduct at the royal session of June 23, 1789, had shown that he held considerably on to his dignity. At all events, he had a queen and brothers who would have vetoed any such abnegation. The English were alive to this fact, and therefore in their revolution they changed their dynasty, and put a prince on the throne to whom constitutional royalty was still an elevation. Either the Duke of Orleans king, or a republic, was therefore the true statesmanlike expedient for France after the Revolution. Danton has been persistently charged — without a particle of evidence being adduced — with secretly favoring the candidature of the duke; were that so, he would still, for that reason, have been more of a patriotic statesman than either Mirabeau or Lafayette, who clung to Louis XVI.

But now, the most auspicious opportunity having come for getting rid of the Bourbons, he is openly republican, whenever first he may have become so. First of all, *he* is republican; for all others, Robespierre included, are still royalists. He declares that the Assembly shall say that the flight of Louis is a forfeiture of the crown, and decree France a republic.

He causes his Club of the Cordeliers to publish an address, of which the following is an extract: —

"There is no longer any pretended agreement of a people with its king. Louis has abdicated his kingdom; henceforth he will be nothing to us, unless he shall become our enemy.

"Legislators! think of how impossible it is, after what has happened, that you can inspire the people with any degree of confidence in a functionary called king; therefore we implore you, in the name of the fatherland, either to declare immediately that France is no longer a monarchy but *that it is a republic*, or at least to wait until all the primary assemblies have declared their wish on this important question, before you again fetter this, the finest empire in the world, with the chains of monarchy."

This address was received with enthusiasm by all the patriotic societies of Paris, except the Jacobins. This society was still so royalist that the address there met with a violent opposition.

Meanwhile it was learned that the royal family had (unfortunately for France, I rather think) been stopped, and members of the Assembly were delegated to accompany them back to Paris.

Danton then makes a speech, in which he says, —

"The individual called King of the French has fled, after having sworn to maintain the constitution; and I hear it said that he has not forfeited the crown. . . . Certainly he must be criminal, unless he be an imbecile. It would be a horrible spectacle to present to the universe, if, having the choice between thinking our King a criminal or an imbecile, we did not choose the latter alternative.

"But a royal individual cannot be king, when he is imbecile; and we do not want a regency, but an executive council. This council should not be chosen from among the Assembly. Let the departments assemble, and each choose an elector, which electors ought to appoint the ten or twelve persons who should constitute the council."

Danton, certainly, then does all he can to have France then and there made a republic; and this is his best work as agitator.

But the Assembly did not utilize the opportunity to dispense with a king; they overlooked Louis' flight, and let him remain a useless figure-head of the constitutional ship they were constructing. From this time, however, Paris was divided into two camps: republicans — the masses of the people — and royalists, with whom now the official middle-class leaders ranged themselves.

Between these two camps it soon came to a bloody skirmish. On a Sunday evening, the 17th of July, 1791, almost the anniversary of the great "Federation Festival," while the Champ de Mars was crowded with citizens, who had come to sign a petition, drawn by the Dantonist Robert, praying the Assembly for the king's deposition, and which had been spread on the altar of the country, Lafayette, the middle-class general, and Bailly, the middle-class mayor, arrived, at the head of an armed force, and, after reading the Riot-Act, fired on the people, killing a number of citizens.

That was the first collision between the middle classes and the masses. It afterwards sent Bailly to the scaffold, and Lafayette into exile. The last collision between the same parties is known as the *Commune of Paris*.

Meanwhile the principal republican leaders were threatened with arrest. In consequence, Danton left France, and went to London, where he staid a couple of months with his step-brother. This was the time he made his English trip, and not after taking the Bastille, in 1789, as most histories have it.

When he returned, he was elected deputy prosecutor of the Commune; but his career as agitator had now closed. He performed the duties of his office, but took hardly any part in public life. He was waiting for events to ripen.

The Constituent Assembly at length finished its work, and made the King, for the last time, go through the farce of swearing to the constitution they had prepared; then they closed their sittings, on Sept. 30, 1791, after passing a last, silly resolution, on the motion of Robespierre, that none of its members should be eligible to the incoming Legislative Body. They had faithfully served their class; they left their class in supreme power, with nothing, surely, to fear from above, and nothing, apparently, to fear from below.

* * *

Since, now, it was the object of the French Revolution to install the rich middle classes, the plutocracy, in supreme power, and since they have been exercising that power in France now for nearly a century, as they have in the United States for about the same length of time, and in Great Britain for a much longer period, it may be interesting to know what account they can give of their stewardship, as surely one day or other they will have to render one.

We saw that they rightfully acquired supreme power; for the force of things, the Power behind Evolution, *willed* it so. But why? They surely must have had some function, some office to perform. "Whatever is, is rational;" i. e., there is some reason for its being.

Carlyle says they were appointed to guard against gluts, to preside over the distribution and apportionment of wages for work done. If that was their only or principal function, they certainly have performed it miserably, especially in France, as we shall see by and by; and I do not wonder that Carlyle much prefers as rulers the abbots and the strong mailed hands of the Middle Ages. But then the Power behind Evolution has committed a mistake. I rather think that while these were some of their offices, among others, they were yet merely incidental; and that their principal function, their principal use, has been a wholly different one.

Our race was to be raised up on a far higher plane than it occupied during the Middle Ages. But this could not be done at once, especially since production was yet in a very backward state. Men were to be raised up to the highest form of co-operation, *free* co-operation, where no one was to be dependent for his living on any other individual. But if society then had distributed her wealth equitably, even all the wealth she by all her efforts could produce, it would have proven the poverty of all. The great need, then, was to increase production; increase it immensely. That could be done only by the workers. But of these only the middle classes had sufficient intelligence to be put in command of society, and so they were placed in supreme power, *for the specific purpose of increasing production.*

Now, it must be admitted they have performed that function remarkably well. Production has, by universal consent, increased wonderfully; and, what is still more important, the *potential* power of production is now literally illimitable. For while it still may be said, that should even the richest nation at this moment distribute its wealth equitably, many would, probably, be in want; yet this is no longer because society cannot now with her best effort satisfy all, but because society *dares* not produce all it can, for reasons presently to be given. If society were permitted to employ all willing hands and brains, she could, with our present appliances, and without a single new invention, procure for every one all desirable comforts with four hours' daily labor by each. That is wholly due to the division of labor, machinery, the inventions, which the middle classes have utilized; to their initiative, private "enterprise," and free competition, in France as elsewhere. It should also be remembered, to the credit of the French *bourgeoisie*, that *they were the first to get up a public exposition of the skilled products of labor*, to wit, in Paris, and already as early as 1799, and thus started our Universal Expositions, that have given rise to more new ideas than the Crusades ever did. The middle classes, then, have fulfilled their principal function, that for which they were placed in power, splendidly, in France as well as elsewhere.

There is another good thing they have done, — not exactly an immediate good, but good for our progress in the future, — that is, that they have taught the masses innumerable wants, made necessaries and decencies of life of a great many things that were luxuries, or entirely unknown, in the Middle Ages.

But what have they done to enable the masses *to satisfy these wants?*

Ah! it is the great indictment against them, that they have cared nothing at all for *social wants*, but only for their private interests. That is why society does not now produce all it can: because it would be prejudicial to the *private* interests, to the *profits*, of the plutocracy. Of course they have most miserably performed those social duties which Carlyle dins into their ears. But, then, the British middle class, being first in the field, gave the French a very bad precedent and example to follow.

What if Giffen can prove that the *élite* of the British workers are a little better off than they were forty years ago? The British working-class, as a whole, are not so well off as their forefathers were at the end of the Middle Ages, when four days' labor sufficed for a week's support. Hear Professor Thorold Rogers, a middle-class economist himself: "From 1563 to 1824, the very period when manufacturers and traders were acquiring immense fortunes, and the value of agricultural lands was being trebled, a legal conspiracy was entered into by both great political parties, and carried out by those interested, to cheat the English workman of his wages, to deprive him of hope, and degrade him into the utmost poverty." And read that splendid little book, *Darkness and Dawn*,[1] written by a Christian Englishman, and its brilliantly scathing denunciation of the English middle classes ("whose hell is: not to make money," according to Carlyle). Read how they hitched women and babes to the machinery of production, invaded and broke up the family circle, introduced perilous and deadly conditions of labor, deformed the human frame, inoculated the human body with trade diseases from dust of steel, of flint, of rags, of coal, from vapors of lead, gas, chlorine, acids, and mutilated the bodies of the workers with trade appliances, with bands, wheels, and unprotected machinery; read how they cut wages down to the finest point, stretched the working hours, "cropped" the dinner hours, and paid the serfs in "truck."

The French followed this example, did even worse; for while the British plutocrats despised their working classes, the French *bourgeoisie* manifested absolute *hatred* for theirs. The English at least passed a poor-law, the French *descended to the lowest crimes.*

One thing that proves this charge is the sale of the *national estates.* This whole damning record of crimes, committed right after their coming into power, which now has been brought to light, explains the surprising political somersaults of the *bourgeoisie* immediately after the Revolution.

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[1] Published by Kegan Paul & Co., Paternoster Square, London.

Historians have applauded the expropriation of clergy and nobles, without inquiring into whose hands their estates fell. They tell of discourses, battles, constitutions, and decrees, of every thing that dazzles; but have been silent as to the uninterrupted series of feverish, furious sales, — sales amounting to milliards of francs, — not of course to those who had only labor to give in exchange, but to those able to pay cash, and pay quickly — or, who pretended to be able. And if occasionally some patriotic voice was raised in favor of the proletariat, the jobbers and financiers never failed to evoke the spectre of "agrarian law."

The first lands confiscated were, as we saw, those of the clergy, valued at that time at four hundred million dollars. They consisted of rectories, priories, convents, chapels, seminaries, castles, farmhouses, vineyards, forests, etc. First they talked of selling eighty million dollars worth, to pay the public debt, that is to say, to satisfy bankers and capitalists; at length they resolved to sell three hundred and seventy-five million dollars worth: but not a *sou* was appropriated to the poor, of whom yet there were a hundred thousand in charity-houses in the large cities alone. These lands were bought up in the course of a couple of years, in large blocks, by companies, or, as we should say now, syndicates, of speculators and capitalists, who of course killed off competition by people of small means; and so raging was the fever, that much land was sold which was not for sale at all. Now, observe this: it was easy enough for these syndicates to buy, for only twelve per cent was to be paid within a short time after the sale; the rest might have several years to run. Thus it happened that the first terms arrived at the commencement of 1792. Then considerable sums were due, naturally, because heavy purchases had been made. But the flow of money into the nation's coffers was very slow, and finally stopped entirely. The speculators, though in possession of the lands, and drawing revenues from them, gave the course of the Revolution as an excuse, and, that it might be an effective excuse, did considerable towards fomenting the troubles and violence of this year. This, then, was the first swindle. They had four hundred million dollars worth of land, for which they as a rule had paid but twelve per cent of its value; we shall afterwards see how audacious they became during the following year.

After Aug. 10, to be told of in the next chapter, two other immense batches of lands were added to the stock from which to plunder, — the communal lands, and the estates of the emigrants. As the working-class greatly helped the middle class to the successful issue of that day, it was resolved immediately after harvest to distribute the communal lands — comprising about one-tenth of all the soil of France — amongst all the inhabitants of the respective communes; and also, that the estates of the emigrants should be divided into small lots, and sold to the poor on redeemable ground-rents. But the middle classes knew how to circumvent all that. On the 10th of October, 1792, the Convention (which we shall see by and by was dominated at first by the plutocrats) resolved to defer the distribution of the communal lands, "as it would involve such an immense amount of labor;" and in regard to the property of the emigrants it determined to dispose, for the time being, but of the personal property. This latter was auctioned off with vigor, so that in less than a month thereafter the rich and costly beds, mirrors, paintings, bureaus, billiards, etc., of the nobility adorned the mansions of the money-aristocracy. A knowledge of these doings will very much explain the political events that are to be related, — explain to a great extent Marat and Hébert.

Of course these nefarious speculations were not limited to land. Speculators and stock-jobbers are never restrained by the sentiments that move other men. They were, all these first years of the Revolution, notoriously and defiantly making "corners" in corn and other articles of food, and thereby caused those horrible famines that decimated the Parisians regularly every winter, except one sole winter when the Jacobins, the Mountain party, were in power.

These are the deeds of the French *bourgeoisie*, when first they step upon the scene as masters. Ah, those noble, generous thinkers Diderot, Rousseau, and others, their teachers, who had prepared a way for their advent, and prayed for it, in their way, as the dawn of a new golden age, had never dreamt that such rascalities would be the immediate result. And the record becomes more and more damning as we proceed, *even unto our days*. The steady pursuit of the French *bourgeoisie* is to fill their felonious pockets with gold, coined out of the sweat and blood of their helpless ill-starred brethren, — not in truth "brethren" in their eyes, but a hated "lower class." Is it a wonder, if these hate them in return?

CHAPTER III.

THE COUNTER-REVOLUTION CRUSHED.

Oct. 1, 1791, to Jan. 21, 1793.

> "*Tu verras la Révolte, aux poings ensanglantés,*
> *Tenir à ton chevet ses flambeaux agités!*
> ("*Thou shalt see Revolt, with bloody fists,*
> *Hold flaring torches at thy bedside!*") — Diderot.

CONSPIRACY. — AUG. 10. — INVASION. — SEPTEMBER MASSACRES. — WAR OF PROPAGANDA. — LOUIS' HEAD "A GAGE OF BATTLE."

THE Legislative Body, under the new constitution, met immediately after the Constituent Assembly, on Oct. 1, 1791. It was composed wholly of new men, young men, *middle-class* men. It was decidedly more radical than its predecessor: its right consisted of constitutional royalists, its left of republicans, — the celebrated Girondins, who were aspiring lawyers to a great extent, and talkers, some of them very fine talkers. Its short existence of about a year was spent almost entirely in defending the new *régime* against its enemies.

The emigration had made alarming progress. The King's two brothers and the Prince of Condé had protested against his acceptance of the constitution, asserting that he had no power to alienate the rights of the ancient monarchy.

The ambassadors of the emigrants were received by foreign governments, while those of the actual French Government were either sent back, or contemptuously received, or in some instances even imprisoned; and French travellers and merchants, suspected of patriotism and of supporting the

Revolution, were subjected to all sorts of indignities all over Europe. Yet even these annoyances contributed to the march of the Revolution, for they led the Legislature at last to confiscate the property of the emigrants, and thus added considerably to the basis of the *assignats*, — and also to the fund to plunder from.

Meanwhile, the Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia, incited by the King's brothers, concentrated their forces nearer and nearer the French frontiers. The King and Queen of France themselves conspired with the foreigners.

Louis wrote on the 3d of December, 1791, to the emperor, that, *for recovering his absolute power*, he had nothing else to trust to than *an unsuccessful war on the part of France;* and the Queen in March, 1792, communicated the French plan of campaign to the prospective enemy. She wrote to Marcy, her Austrian confidant: "Dumouriez," at that time the Girondin French minister of war, "having no longer a doubt that the powers have come to an agreement as to the march of their troops, has now the intention of commencing the war by an attack on Savoy, and another on the country surrounding Liège. It is the army of Lafayette that is to make the latter attack: *so the council has resolved yesterday, and it is well to know the plans, in order to put ourselves on guard, and take all necessary measures.* According to all appearances, this will have to be done quickly."

And then, on July 25, 1792, appeared that ill-starred, famous, or infamous, *manifesto*, dated at Coblentz, and signed by the Duke of Brunswick, generalissimo of the allied forces, which said: —

"Those of the French National Guards who fight against the troops of the allied courts, and who shall be taken with arms in their hands, will be punished *as rebels against their King.*

"The inhabitants of all cities, towns, and villages who shall dare to oppose the troops of their Imperial and Royal Majesties, and shall shoot on them, either in the open field, or from windows, doors, or other openings of their houses, shall be punished summarily, according to all the rigor of laws of war, and their houses demolished or burnt.

"The city of Paris and all its inhabitants, without distinction, are warned to submit immediately to the King, to place that prince in full and complete liberty, and to secure to him, and to all the royal personages, the inviolability which the laws of nature and of nations demand of subjects towards their sovereign. Their Imperial and Royal Majesties make all the members of the Legislature, of the department, of the municipality, and of the National Guard of Paris, as well as justices of the peace, and every one else concerned, *responsible with their heads* for all that may happen, and will have them tried by courts-martial, without hope of pardon. Further, their said majesties declare, on their words as Emperor and King, that if the palace of the Tuileries be forced or violated, or if there be offered the least violence and outrage to the persons of their majesties the King and Queen, and of the Royal Family, if care be not taken to insure their security and liberty, they will *execute an exemplary and ever-memorable vengeance, and deliver Paris over to military execution and total destruction.*"

Now, in all candor, is it a wonder that Parisians, — Parisians, remember, the most excitable population on the face of the earth, — when they read that "manifesto," became enraged, even hysteric?

And yet the Parisians did not know the worst. They did not know that *this "manifesto" was the work of their own King*, Louis XVI.; that it was draughted from instructions confided by him to a Genevese journalist, Mallet du Pan; and that, in particular, the menace against Paris was, in that memorandum, indicated in the most explicit manner.

It certainly was fatal to the King, his cause, and his party, that he had to form all hopes of saving himself on the success of the foreign enemies of France.

On the 30th of July the allied forces enter French territory. They consist of fifty thousand Prussians, in the finest condition, and supported by an unusually large train, both of heavy and field artillery, and with the King in person, accompanied by his mistress, among them; furthermore, forty-five thousand Austrians, the greater part of them veterans from the Turkish wars; next, six thousand Hessians; and lastly, upwards of twelve thousand French emigrants, — in all, a hundred and thirteen thousand men.

Now, Danton! you are called on to enter on the scene, as an instrument in the hands of the Power behind Evolution, to crush this counter-Revolution, and to save France and the Revolution!

* * *

That the insurrection of Aug. 10 was a most legitimate one, there can be no doubt. Here was the new France, the Revolution, in a life-and-death struggle with the whole ancient *regime,* and there were the constitutional defenders of that new France in league with the invaders. It was an imperious necessity to overthrow these constituted authorities, and make them harmless; patriotism demanded it.

It has been said that the insurrection was one made by the whole population of Paris "in all its majesty." This is nonsense. In the first place, a very definite plan was followed, and a whole people can lay no plan, nor secure unity of action; and, next, the population of Paris was not very "majestic" at that moment; they were rather in that state of hysterics which may be described as *hysteric fear.*

No, there were leaders then and there; and the success was due to the leaders, as, indeed, in all popular movements, the vast majority of the participants are mere imitators. Danton, undoubtedly, was the soul of the movement, though it is difficult to prove it, for, first, it was the outcome of a conspiracy which is secret, and next, as already said, he never wrote; so we have, unfortunately, no memoirs or letters from him, as from so many other lesser characters. But he was, by all his contemporaries, looked upon as the chief of that insurrection; and Madame Robert, who spent the night of it in Danton's house, anxious about the safety of her husband, said to Lucille Desmoulins, Camille's wife: "But this Danton, who is the centre of this thing! If my husband perishes, I am that kind of woman that I shall kill him."

Of course he had co-workers, also, in laying the plans. First, there were the members of his club, which now was joined by the Alsatian soldier Westermann, who will lead the people in the assault farther on; then there was a committee which the sections had appointed to demand the King's deposition of the Legislature, and composed of most notable men, like Destournelles, director-general of the registry; Cournand, professor of literature at the College of France; Restout, member of the Academy of Painting; Chambon, of the Royal Society of Medicine; and more than thirty lawyers, judges, and merchants; then the Girondin members of the Legislature faithfully abetted him. One of these, Barbaroux, deputy from Marseilles, called on that city to send five hundred men "who know how to die;" in response to which call, three times five hundred determined men left their tools and their forges, and started on their memorable march through the heart of France, singing that inspiriting song, just composed by a young officer, Rouget de Lisle, at Strasbourg, and ever since called after them, *The Marseillaise.* This song, by the way, is not a revolutionary one at all, nor even a republican song (Rouget de Lisle broke his sword when he heard of the abolition of royalty), but an appeal to rise to repel invasion. How their footfalls through France are listened to by the conspirators, for the insurrection will be timed by their arrival! This fact alone, that these strangers were so very much needed, does not speak very highly for the revolutionary spirit of the Parisians of those days. At last they arrive, on July 30, a Sunday, and Danton puts them into quarters in his district, near his club. During the week all the arrangements for the insurrection are then made.

Last of all, Danton prepares himself for the worst. On the Sunday following he goes to Arcis-sur-Aube, because, as he said before the Revolutionary Tribunal, "Danton is a good son. I wanted to say good-by to my mother, and settle my affairs." He settles the house in which his mother lived on her, and on his stepfather if the latter should outlive her.

At midnight, between the 9th and 10th of August, the decisive moment had arrived. The alarm-bell sounded, and ceased not the whole night. It was a warm, beautiful, starlit night. The streets were crowded with dense masses of the people. With the first sounds of the bell, delegates from about half the sections of Paris wended their way toward the Hôtel de Ville, where they found the legal municipal body in session, and sullen. The members of this body were invited to disperse, and did so with alacrity. The delegates took their vacant places, and thus the first revolutionary Commune of Paris was formed.

The next important step taken was for the new Commune to summon before it Mandat, the commandant of the National Guards, a man determined to defend the King's palace and the King to the best of his ability, and who had disposed the most faithful of his troops to the best advantage. He obeyed, ignorant of the change that had taken place. When he appeared he was put under arrest. These two steps assured the success of the insurrection.

Danton, who had been present, now went to the Club of the Cordeliers, where the Marseillais were ready and waiting. He electrified them with these few words, "You hear the alarm-bell: it is the voice of the people. You have hastened from the extremity of the empire to the head of the nation, which is menaced by the conspiracies of despotism. May that bell sound the last hour of kings! To arms, and *ça ira!*" Scarcely had he finished, when "*Ça ira*" shook the very vaults of the building, and the Marseillais went about their business. Danton went home to snatch a few moments' sleep with his clothes on, on his couch, while his faithfully sympathetic wife watched and wept beside him. It was not long before he was again summoned to his club.

It was now daybreak. The insurrectionists were poorly equipped, mostly with pikes, and, to tell the truth, poor in spirits. Indeed, it was necessary that Westermann should take Santerre, the redoubtable commander of the fiercest *faubourg*, that of St. Antoine, by the throat, and with drawn sabre force him to march. The Marsellais were the only men that presented any military appearance. They were all now marching on the Tuileries. There was one interested spectator, — Napoleon Bonaparte. He was of opinion that with one solid regiment he could have dispersed the whole crowd, as no doubt he could have done.

The royal family had Swiss mercenaries and some gentlemen pensioners to defend themselves with. When Mandat's arrest and death — he was later on, in being taken to prison, killed by a pistol-shot from a bystander — were learned, Louis was advised not to attempt any defence; so at seven in the morning he collected his family around him, said "*marchons*," and all marched to the hall of the Legislature, under whose protection he placed himself and family. They were temporarily accommodated with a small *loge* in the gallery, where the King soon was engaged in his usual morning occupation, — eating a roast chicken.

The gentlemen who had gathered around their King for his defence escaped from the palace by various exits. But it was a great, great pity that the King did not, before leaving, order the Swiss not to resist; for just now, when the whole object of the insurrection had been gained, the insurrectionists reached the palace and demanded access. It was refused. Westermann and the Marseillais tried persuasive words, but in vain. Somehow, then, some shots happened to go off, which rent holes in the roof of the palace; and immediately the Swiss answered with a discharge of musketry, which left a great number of patriots dead or dying.

And now commenced a terrible battle. Even Mandat's faithful guards took sides against the Swiss. The Marseillais fought most gallantly. Each, as he fell, bequeathed his gun to his comrades, and pointed to the pockets where his last cartridges were; and dying lips cried out, "Revenge us!" There were twelve hundred Swiss defenders, and but a very few were taken prisoners.

Thus ended the royalty of Louis XVI., and this was the answer to Brunswick's "manifesto." And now were found among the King's papers indubitable proofs of Mirabeau's treason to the popular cause. His body had been taken to the Pantheon accompanied by a whole people: his bones were now soon to be ejected ignominiously from the national temple. But the *worst* was, that the people became savagely suspicious, and turned with ever-growing confidence, with worship even, to Robespierre, *the incorruptible*. It was this suspicion of capable friends, and worship of imbecility if only "incorruptible," that caused all the subsequent disasters; and should be a great warning to us, for this horrible, unhealthy suspicion is altogether too prevalent with us, i.e., in our labor parties. Robespierre was, the day after, elected a member of the Commune by one of the sections that had been unrepresented during the night of Aug. 10; and Marat, the suspicious and bloodthirsty Marat, though not a member, also installed himself in its place of meeting to watch and direct.

* * *

Danton was energetic enough, not alone to make the insurrection a success, but to gather all the fruits of the victory, and bear all its burdens. At ten o'clock the next day he was virtually dictator. The Legislature, by 222 out of 284 votes, appointed him minister of justice.

We can have no better comment on this appointment than the words of the celebrated Girondin and philosopher, Condorcet, written while he was wandering about proscribed and devoted to the guillotine, and Danton still apparently in power: —

"They have reproached me for voting for Danton for minister of justice. Here are my reasons: It was necessary to have in the government a man who had the confidence of those who had just overturned the throne; a man who, by his ascendency, could keep in order the many unruly instruments of a Revolution which undoubtedly was useful, glorious, and necessary; a man with such talents and character that he would be agreeable to his fellow-ministers and the members of the Assembly. Danton alone had these qualities. I chose him, and I do not regret it. Perhaps he deferred too much to popular ideas, and carried into public affairs too much the people's notions; but the only thing which, in times of revolution, can save the laws, is, *to act with the people by directing it*, and all parties who have separated themselves from the people have ended by ruining themselves and the people at the same time. Besides, Danton has that precious quality which ordinary men never have, of neither hating nor fearing those who are wise, talented, and virtuous."

This is the estimate of Danton by a just man.

The following day Danton presents himself before the Legislature to take the oath, and on that occasion utters these memorable words: "Whenever justice regains its regular course, popular vengeance should cease. I engage myself to protect those within your jurisdiction. I shall march at their head, and be responsible for them." "They applaud," says the *Moniteur* of the next day. Ah, Danton, you have good intentions, but you will find you have taken too great an engagement, even for you!

There are plenty of other things for him to do. The court party was defeated, but not vanquished. All the journals of the day, moreover, agree that great numbers of provincials were flocking to Paris from all sides. None could say whether it was the advancing enemy, or a wish to free the King, that moved them. The suspicious Parisians generally said to one another, "They come to betray us the more surely when the enemy is before our gates."

And look at the terrible situation. On the 18th of August, Lafayette cowardly deserts his camp and his soldiers.

On the 22d the Vendean peasants rise in insurrection. Eight hundred of them occupy Chatillon, crying, "Live the King! Death to the Parisians!"

On the 23d the Austrians take Longwy. In the Southeast the French territory had already been violated by the Sardinians.

France believed itself lost, and was not far from it.

The Girondins were in power, but also in despair. There was only Danton self-confident. He took the rudder of state; he made his colleagues into his clerks; he imposed his will on the Girondin ministers, Roland, Servan, Lebrun; he took upon himself to direct foreign affairs, the war-office, the ministry of the interior, besides his own officers.

There is ample evidence for that. Let us take the one witness to whom are due nearly all the bad opinions the world has had of Danton, — the hysteric recriminations of the wife of Minister Roland, of that Madame Roland who, for some time after Aug. 10, fancied herself queen of France: —

"It is a great pity that the Council shall be spoiled by that D., who has so bad a reputation. . . . *No one could show a greater zeal, a greater love for liberty, a more lively desire to agree with his colleagues, in order to serve it.* I looked at his repulsive face, and though I said to myself that I was *sure of nothing against him*, that the most honest man must, in times like these, have two reputations, I yet could not imagine an honest man with such a face. . . . *He was continually in the war bureaux.*"

And he himself said afterwards, "I was just as much an adjunct of the war-office, as concerned with my own department."

What then did he do? These three great things: He took the lead in crushing the counter-Revolution in Paris, in expelling the invading enemy, and in planting the republic on a secure foundation.

Observe the scanty means at his disposal. To oppose to the disciplined troops of the allies, the French had mainly raw recruits, badly equipped, badly commanded, and who were without confidence in their chiefs.

A year afterwards Danton thus described the situation to the Convention, without being contradicted: "Last year, in the Executive Council, I took, on my own responsibility, the necessary measures to infuse into the people the grand impulse to march to the frontiers——Let me remind you of the terrible Revolution of August. The whole of Paris was then on fire. The Parisians would not go outside of their walls. Excellent patriots feared to leave their hearthstones, because they suspected enemies and conspirators within. I have myself (for sometimes it is necessary to speak of one's self) called, I say, the Executive Council together, and with them the heads of sections, the members of the Commune, and a committee of the Legislature. We agreed upon the measures to be taken, and the people seconded our efforts."

Danton was very modest here. This is, in fact, all he has himself told us of what he did. We must gather the rest from the public documents, from his speeches, and the splendid results obtained.

First, then, he had Dumouriez appointed commander-in-chief, considering him rightly the ablest general France then had.

Paris and the surrounding departments are then called on immediately to furnish fifty thousand men; thirty thousand of these to depart for the frontier, and twenty thousand to form a camp outside the walls of Paris.

But the Parisians murmur, "Depart? Yes, we shall do so; but first we want to be assured that our wives and children are not left to the mercies of conspirators within."

Then it is, in the evening of Aug. 28, that Danton speaks these weighty words in the Assembly: —

"The executive power has charged me to tell the Legislature the measures we have taken for the safety of the country. I shall defend these measures as a revolutionary minister. Hitherto we have made war in the sham fashion of Lafayette. Our warfare is to be a more terrible one. All that can materially serve us in our situation ought to be done. The executive power has appointed commissioners to go into the departments and influence opinion. We think that you, too, should appoint delegates to accompany ours, so that the concert of the representatives of the two authorities may have its due effect.

"We further propose to you to authorize the municipalities, to recruit the best men they have, and equip them well.

"*We have shut the gates of the capital*, and for good reasons. It is important *to seize all conspirators*, but there are thirty thousand of them. It is necessary that they be arrested to-morrow, so that to-morrow there may be free communication between Paris and all the rest of France.

"We ask of you authority *to make house-searches.* There ought to be in Paris eighty thousand muskets in good state. Well, those who have arms should fly to the frontiers. The nations who have conquered Liberty have done so by flying at the enemy. What would France say if Paris should, in stupor, wait for the arrival of the enemy?

"Numerous forces will soon be assembled here. Only give the municipalities authority to take all that is necessary on engaging themselves to indemnify the owners. All belongs to the Fatherland when the Fatherland is in danger."

These are the two ideas that form the inspiration, the flame, of Danton's eloquence, — *Liberty* and *Fatherland.* It is by these ideas, which he may be said to clothe in the form of religious dogmas, that he incites his people to sacrifices. There is another thing worthy of notice: the measures he proposes are always such as should be done now, *immediately.* He proposes them in the form of motions, they become laws the same moment, and he himself causes them to be instantly executed.

Thus the house-searches take place the very same night. We can form an idea of them from the following description by Peltier, a royalist: —

"Let the reader fancy to himself a vast metropolis, the streets of which, a few days before, were alive with carriages and citizens constantly passing and re-passing, — let him fancy to himself, I say, streets so populous and animated suddenly struck with the dead silence of the grave before sunset on a fine summer evening. All the shops are shut; everybody retires into the interior of his house, trembling for life and property. All are in fearful expectation of the events of a night, during which even the efforts of despair are not likely to afford the least resource to any individual. The sole object of these 'domiciliary visits,' it is pretended, is to search for arms. The barriers, however, are shut and guarded with the strictest vigilance, and boats are stationed on the river at regular distances, filled with armed men. Every one supposes that he is informed against; everywhere persons and property are being hidden and stowed away; everywhere are heard the interrupted sounds of the muffled hammer, as some one, with cautious knock, is completing a hiding-place. Roofs, garrets, sinks, chimneys, — all are just the same to fear, incapable of calculating any risk. Here a man squeezed up behind the wainscot, which has been nailed back on him, seems to form a part of the wall; there another is suffocated, between fear and heat, between mattresses; a third, rolled up in a cask, loses all sense of existence by the tension of his sinews. Fear is everywhere stronger than pain. Men tremble, but they do not shed tears; the heart shivers, the eye is dull, and the breast contracted. Women display prodigies of tenderness and intrepidity. It was by them that most of the men were concealed. It was one o'clock in the morning when the domiciliary visits began. Patrols, consisting each of sixty pikemen, were in every street. The nocturnal tumult of so many armed men, the incessant knocks to make people open their doors, the crash of those that were burst off their hinges, and the uproar that reigned the whole night long in the public houses, formed together a picture that never will be effaced from my memory."

The result was, the prisons and houses of detention were filled with some three thousand prisoners. Of course it was impossible to arrest the whole batch of thirty thousand conspirators of whom Danton talked, but his object was gained: all who were not arrested were thoroughly intimidated, and by that blow he had virtually already crushed the counter-Revolution inside Paris.

On the morning of the following Sunday, Sept. 2, the people read the following proclamation by the Commune, posted up on all the walls of Paris: —

"Citizens, the enemy is at our gates. Verdun, which just now detains him, can hold out only some eight days. The citizens who defend it have sworn to die rather than surrender; that means that they are going to make a wall around us with their bodies. It is your duty to fly to their assistance. Citizens, march immediately under your flags! Come, let us meet to-day on the Champ de Mars, and form, the very same moment, an army of sixty thousand men. Let us go to expire under the blows of the enemy, or to exterminate him under ours."

And in the forenoon of the same day a committee from the Commune appears at the bar of the Legislature, and makes the communication that the alarm-cannon will sound in an instant, to invite all patriotic citizens of Paris and neighboring departments to be on the Champ de Mars, and march against the enemy.

The Legislature then, on the proposition of Danton, decrees the punishment of death against everybody who, possessing arms, shall refuse either to march in person or give up the arms.

And Danton makes a last effort to direct the popular feeling against the invading enemy: —

"Gentlemen, it is a satisfaction to the ministers of a free people to be able to announce to you that our fatherland will be saved. Everybody is ready, and burns to strike the blow. You know that Verdun is not yet in the power of the enemy, and you have learnt that the garrison has promised to immolate the first one who proposes to surrender.

"A part of our people will go to the frontier, another part will go outside the walls of our city, and a third part keep order inside. The Commune has just proclaimed, in a solemn manner, its invitation to citizens to arm and march to the defence of our country. This is the proper time for you, gentlemen, to declare that the capital has merited well of the whole of France.

"This also is the time for the Legislature to constitute itself into a committee of the whole for war. Assist us in directing the sublime enthusiasm of the people, and appoint delegates who will second us in our grand measures, and send out couriers to all departments to make known the decrees you will render.

"The cannon you will hear is not so much an alarm-signal. It is a sign to charge on the enemies of the country. All that we need is audacity, again audacity, and forever audacity, and our country is saved."

Alas ! at the very moment when Danton spoke these words, by which he simply wanted to infuse into his hearers his own self-confidence and courage, as he so often did, — those terrible murders, of which Parisians to all eternity should be ashamed, were being committed in all the prisons. We shall immediately see that Danton had no part in them at all. He was the reverse of cruel and bloodthirsty.

These September massacres made all his colleagues, Roland in particular, lose their heads. They demanded the translation of the government to Tours or Blois, behind the Loire.

Danton, at this proposition, shakes his lion head: —

"France is in Paris. To abandon Paris is to deliver France and the Revolution to our enemies. If we give way, we are undone. We must maintain our ground by all possible means, and save ourselves by audacity."

Then Danton hurries to the Champ de Mars, where thousands upon thousands of soldiers enroll themselves in the armies. What language he spoke there, tradition does not tell us; but we know it was his words that vibrated throughout France from Dunkirk to Marseilles, and that in France words have an influence and a power to move that they have in no other country. How he could move his people, is well shown by an incident that must have occurred about this time: —

A crowd of women, mothers and wives of the men who had gone to the frontiers, met Danton in the street, and upbraided him for causing their sons and husbands to expose themselves to death and slaughter. Danton answered, and spoke of the fatherland, to whom the children belong rather than to father and mother. He spoke with such a violent tenderness about France, while the tears commenced to run down that rugged face of his, like unto a dead volcano, that the women entirely broke down, and shed tears themselves for France rather than for their dear ones.

Danton from that period, and ever after, stands as the embodiment of patriotism, the personification of France in danger and France saved.

While, however, Danton was unceasingly pushing men to the frontiers, the allies were constantly approaching Paris. But Dumouriez had so manœuvred that he had got the Prussians between his own army and the capital. In that way the chances of the two parties had become about equal. The fate of the Prussian army on the one hand, and of France on the other, seemed to depend on the outcome of a battle which was imminent every day. But the Prussian troops were veterans, while the French were raw recruits. Danton, therefore, was willing to avail himself of any means to avert the danger. He resolved to negotiate; and it is a question whether his negotiations or recruiting did most to save France. He ordered Dumouriez to enter into correspondence with the Duke of Brunswick and the King of Prussia. It must be remembered that the latter power was not the national enemy of France that it has now become. Austria, however, was the hereditary foe. It must also be borne in mind, that this was just the year when Poland was being partitioned between Prussia, Austria, and Russia. Danton, in fact, made such a good use of the rivalry of the allies in the East, in his negotiations, that their alliance immediately commenced to loosen.

Meanwhile the cannonade at Valmy (so called because it was no battle, or scarcely a skirmish) occurred. It was an effort to dislodge the French from one of their positions, and was unsuccessful. On the same day the King of Prussia learned that the Convention had proclaimed France a republic; and a third element enters into play, that must not be omitted.

An anonymous publication, the *Memoirs of a Statesman*, long supposed to be by the Prince of Hardenberg, but which, at all events, is by a German statesman, and which made a good deal of noise in its day, contains this item: "The Countess of Lichtenau, the King's mistress, yielding to a large bribe from the French government, employed her too powerful influence to cause the King to retreat." We know that Danton had a large sum of secret-service funds at his command, for which he afterwards accounted to the council of ministers, but the use of which he always obstinately refused *publicly* to disclose, even before the Revolutionary Tribunal; and we also know that Danton was not above corrupting others for patriotic purposes, of which more anon.

This we know, that whatever the motive, and in spite of the entreaty of the French princes to march on Paris, the King of Prussia, on the 29th of September, revoked the orders given for a battle, and ordered a retreat. The Prussian army folds its tents and marches away, — a most sorry ending to their bombastic "manifesto," — the French army quietly looking on, without pursuing or harassing it in any way, to the great scandal of Marat, who wanted the Prussians "annihilated."

The French Republic, however, owes its salvation to this retreat of the Prussians. As soon as they are out of the country, Dumouriez commences to drive back the Austrians, and succeeds so well that a week after there is not an enemy on French soil; so that Danton, on Oct. 4, can move a declaration in the Convention that "the fatherland is no more in danger."

And we know, lastly, that Danton performed herculean labors in the way of securing the republic on firm foundations. There were two means to employ for that purpose. One was to replace all the royal functionaries with as sound republicans as could be had, which was done; the other was to influence the opinion of the country, to republicanize it. We have already heard Danton announce that the Executive Council had resolved to send commissioners to all the departments for that purpose, and ask the Legislature to do likewise. This was of the highest importance, for it had already been resolved that a convention should immediately be elected to finally settle the government of France, and it was naturally desired that this convention should be republican.

One of the last acts of the Legislature — a generous act, without precedent — was to confer French citizenship on the following foreigners: Priestley, Paine, Bentham, Wilberforce, Clarkson, Mackintosh, David Williams, Gordon, Baron de Cloots, Campe, Corneille, Pan, Pestalozzi, Washington, Hamilton, Madison, Klopstock, Kosciusko, and Schiller. They were thus qualified to be elected to the Convention.

In the month of October, Dumouriez pays a visit to Paris, and Danton does the honors of the young republic to him at the Convention and at the Jacobin Club. Everywhere the two are applauded by the people as the saviors of France.

* * *

Danton is entirely innocent of the September massacres. The historians who, repeating one after the other, have charged him even with being an *instigator* of them, have been cruelly unjust.

There is not a document, not an order, not a memorandum, not a letter or scrap of a letter, or any thing that proves this charge, or in any way connects Danton with the crime; further, if any authority was connected with it, it was the Commune, but Danton had resigned his prosecutorship when he became minister, and did not visit the Commune at all during or before those terrible days, having his hands full at the Executive Council; and lastly, what is absolutely conclusive, when in 1796 certain "*Septembriseurs*," as they were called, were tried and condemned, *Danton's name was not once mentioned*, either by accusers, accused, or witnesses.

What happened all through 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5th of September was this: —

We have seen the Parisians thrown into perfect hysterics by Brunswick's manifesto, and the entry of the allies on French territory. At first, the dread of a conspiracy within Paris was added, and the result was hysteric terror. When, by Danton's efforts, that dread was removed, it changed into hysteric rage; and that rage increased as volunteers from the departments flocked into Paris, and the enemy came to within a hundred miles of the capital. Then it was that these volunteers and a part of the population of Paris put to death, after a sort of judgment, nearly all of the counter-revolutionists collected in the prisons and houses of detention, after the "domiciliary visits," and that without either the rest of the population, or the National Guards, or the army, or the authorities doing any thing to prevent it.

Of late a great many Frenchmen have been at considerable trouble to prove that these massacres were "anonymous;" that is to say, that they were not the work of any individual or individuals in particular, but that they were the work of the *whole* population, who took part in them directly or indirectly, and that no human authority would have been able to prevent them.

I believe that is a true explanation, but I cannot see at all how that makes the matter better, either for Parisians or Frenchmen; it makes it, in my eyes, rather worse. The fact really seems to be this: that while Frenchmen, in ordinary times, are, besides being a proverbially polite, also an exceedingly generous nation, they, when excited, fall into two groups, one exceedingly cowardly and the other fiendishly cruel. *Cruel*, I mean, not brutal, like British roughs, who, I am sure, would never take into their heads to scoop out the eyes of a fallen enemy with a pair of scissors, as Frenchwomen did during the Revolution. Now, this cruel portion needed but a small part of the instigation that daily was contained in Marat's paper, to commit the murders; and the rest were in such cowardly fear, that, not to speak of trying to prevent them, they dared not show consternation, disapprobation, but even applauded—*from terror*.

And under these circumstances, without any evidence, to have buried Danton for nearly a century under the load of infamy of having instigated these outrages, — it is really atrocious !

But why did he not prevent them? Was he not minister of justice?

Well, and as such it was not at all, in spite of the big words he spoke on taking the oath of office, specially within his jurisdiction to prevent them. He had, as such, simply to attend to the administration of justice, but *had nothing to do with the maintenance of order, or security of the prisons.* That came partly within the jurisdiction of the Commune of Paris, partly of the minister of the interior, Roland. Why *did not Roland do something?* He used none of the means placed at his disposal.

As to the Legislative Body, "it wanted to prevent the slaughter, and *it could not*," says Mignet; and I suppose that is the fact.

But Danton could, nevertheless, have interposed his great influence with the people, and tried to bring them to reason. Yes, of course, he, knowing the perfect uselessness of his efforts, could have gone and deliberately sacrificed himself, or at least sacrificed all his influence, and made himself impossible as the savior of France, the republic, and the Revolution. That might have been the conduct of a saint, but not of a wise patriot; and I never claim for Danton that he was a saint, but simply a whole, honest man.

We have a fact to *prove* that Danton was not in league with the "*Septembriseurs.*" The Commune of Paris had ordered Adrian Duport, an ex-member of the Constituent Assembly, and a political enemy of Danton, to be arrested outside of the territory of the Commune, and brought to Paris. If that order had been obeyed, Duport would certainly have been massacred. As soon as it was brought to Danton's notice, he, in *spite of repeated remonstrances from Marat and Billaud-Varennes,* — of whom we shall hear more in the future, — promptly and energetically directed, by virtue of his authority as minister of justice, that Duport should not be taken to Paris, but tried at the jurisdiction where the arrest took place. That was done, and he was acquitted.

And now, again, appears Madame Roland, and adds her accusation: "History will undoubtedly preserve the infamous circular of the Commune, which glorified the massacres of September, and instigated all France to go and do likewise, — circular which was sent out in profusion *under the countersign* of the minister of justice."

Yes, history *has* preserved it fortunately; and it is a most infamous circular, dated the 3d of September, and signed, among others, by Marat and Billaud: but Madame Roland is deceived in one particular; it does *not* bear the countersign of Danton, or of the ministry of justice, and has not the name of Danton anywhere.

But *Marat's* name is there: he certainly instigated sufficiently to such acts in general, he declared himself ready to take the responsibility; so let him have it! He was in his person the very embodiment of that mixture of suspicion, terror, and cruelty which dominated the Parisians; of that mental state in hysteric women who one moment may be terribly frightened by a little animal, and the next moment, when it is caught, savagely wring its neck. That he, however, was perfectly honest there cannot be a doubt; but his conceit, his pretensions, were so immoderate as to amount to positive insanity. He liked to give snatches of biography of himself in his journal, and here is one morsel: —

"From my infancy I have been consumed with a yearning for distinction. In all my studies I carry along with me a holy respect for virtue, and my dominant passion, the love for renown. I dare flatter myself that I have not missed my aim, judging from the unworthy persecution to which I have been subjected during the last ten years by the members of the Royal Academy of Sciences, as soon as they learned that my discoveries on light upset all their work during the last century, and that I myself had no wish to enter their society ! "

But when he was assassinated, next year, his whole wealth amounted to twenty-one cents. It is also to his credit, that he did not, like Hébert later on, descend to addressing the people in coarse and vulgar language.

Danton despised him. Once the former said, " I declare to the Convention that I by no means like the individual Marat. I freely avow that I have experienced his temperament, and found it not alone volcanic and bitter, but unsociable." And on another occasion, " I have been accused of being the author of some of this man's [Marat's] writings. I call your presiding officer [the Girondin Petion] to witness. He has read the threatening letter sent me by Marat ; he has overheard an altercation which took place between us at the *mairie*." This altercation turned upon nothing less than an order of arrest issued by Marat, during the days of September, against Roland, which Danton tore in pieces, declaring it should never be executed. Indeed, as we shall afterwards see, Danton's humane behavior during these September days may precisely be what mainly caused his downfall.

* * *

Now the National Convention, the most remarkable assembly of any on record, meets ; and the Legislative Body dissolves on Sept. 21, 1792. Danton, Hérault de Séchelles, Camille Desmoulins, Fabre, Robert, Philip (formerly d'Orléans, now *Égalité*), Robespierre, Marat, Billaud-Varennes, with others, are members from Paris among these eight hundred and fifty " conventionals." Of the foreigners on whom French citizenship was conferred, Priestley, Thomas Paine, and Baron de Cloots have been elected members by various departments; of these the last two take their seats. This is the most radical of all assemblies, so far; here the Girondins form the *Right*, and the party of Robespierre, Marat, and Billaud, the Jacobins, or the Mountain, the *Left*. The members of no particular convictions, except this, that they were all republicans, form the *Centre*, or the *Plain*, and make the majority by supporting either the Girondins or the Mountain. Generally they go with the former, up to May 31. They are those who save their heads, and later on become great men, and — write memoirs. Danton, at first, frequently constitutes himself leader of this Plain, and tries, in that capacity, to reconcile Right and Left.

The first business done by the Convention on the first day of its session — the day of the autumnal equinox, by the way — is to decree the abolition of royalty, and the establishment of the French Republic; an easy thing to do, since it has already been created, and a few days more will see the last enemy driven from French soil. On the same day Danton resigns his office as minister of justice.

But this very ease with which France had got rid of the invaders, together with the usual French worship of *principles*, and impatience for applying them, gave rise to a policy which like a whirlwind took possession of the Girondins, and, to some extent, of the Mountain party, and ruled the Convention from the first day of its session, throughout 1792, and the first part of 1793. This policy was the so-called *war of propaganda*.

The whole philosophy of the eighteenth century had been a laying-down of "principles," and deductions from them. The Constituent Assembly had preceded its constitution with a declaration of the *rights of man*, which was a string of such "principles," or ideas, evolved out of the philosophers' own consciousness; the main one of which was that of Rousseau's, affirming the *sovereignty of the people*, which the republic had now for the first time really realized.

Since these "rights" were looked upon as absolute and universal, belonging to all mankind, without exception of time and place, the conclusion followed, that royalty is everywhere illegitimate, and against nature, a tyranny and a usurpation; and that it is the duty of every free people to overthrow it at home, and, next, to assist other nations in doing likewise.

The principal agitator of these doctrines was, curiously enough, a Prussian, a millionnaire and a nobleman, — that Baron de Cloots whom we have seen elected a member of the Convention. In fact, with him these doctrines constituted a whole system. There was but one sovereign, Humanity; one law, the Rights of Man; one kind of government, that of dividing the whole earth into autonomous municipalities and communes, with Paris for centre. It will be noticed that these are precisely the notions of our anarchists, who have received them in true apostolic succession through the later Hébertists, from Cloots. It is really curious that such crude notions could take the whole Convention, composed of educated men, by storm; but, as a fact, they did, with the exception of Danton and his closer friends. But they, apparently, thought it impossible for some time to oppose the current, for they kept silence; but Danton, nevertheless, as we shall see afterwards, goes on negotiating with foreign powers whenever he can get an opportunity, which is in flagrant contradiction with the doctrine, which does not allow of any parleying with "tyrants." And we shall also see, that, as soon as the policy commences to prove mischievous to the interests of France, Danton courageously stems the tide, and timely turns it.

But at the opening of the Convention, when patriotic fervor was at its highest, and the French armies were victoriously confronting Belgium, then under the dominion of Austria, the hereditary foe that had invaded their country, this policy of armed propaganda seemed very dazzling. Moreover, the Belgian middle classes, speaking the French language, had naturally become infected with the French revolutionary ideas, and implored French intervention. It was therefore in the nature of things that the Convention should resolve to invade and free Belgium. One battle, that of Jemappes, won by Dumouriez, settled the fate of the campaign. In a few weeks the French were masters of the whole country, and received with open arms by its middle classes. At the same time, at the South-east, a French army occupies Savoy, belonging to Sardinia, without a blow, and is received with the same enthusiasm.

Then the Convention cannot contain itself, but goes to work to pass, unanimously and with enthusiasm, the remarkable decree of Nov. 19, 1792, which is a most complete and energetic legal expression of this anarchic theory and policy: —

"The National Convention declares, in the name of the French nation, that it offers fraternity and *support to all nations who wish to recover their liberty*, and charges the executive power that it give the necessary instructions to our generals, that they may give assistance to such nations, and defend all citizens who have been, or may be, harmed for their devotion to liberty. It is further resolved that this resolution shall be translated and printed *in all languages*, and then distributed."

Danton was present at this extraordinary session, but said nothing. He probably thought that this policy would not, for the time being, have any mischievous consequences for the Revolution. Shortly after, he and his friend Lacroix, and a couple of other members, are sent as representatives of the Convention into Belgium, to look after the necessities of the army of occupation, and inaugurate the new government.

But it was not long before it became evident to the leading men of the Convention, and especially to Cambon, the celebrated revolutionary finance-minister, that — what had not for a moment occurred to Cloots and his immediate disciples — this "war of propaganda" would, under all circumstances, be a costly thing for France, both in money and men; that she, in fact, could not, however generous she might feel, support its burdens alone. Therefore another decree was voted, after a feverish discussion, on the 15th of December, 1792, abolishing, in all the countries "conquered for liberty," all feudal rights, duties, taxes, privileges, and corporations, and directing the generals to take and hold, "as pledge for the costs of the war," all the *real and personal property belonging to the treasury, to the prince and his voluntary adherents, and to all public establishments and religious orders.* The object of this law was simply the same as the confiscation of the estates of the nobility and clergy in France, — to broaden the basis of the *assignats*, and thus extend their credit; and, next, to induce the protected nations to take and use this paper money as their currency, as they had to do from the moment their own public revenues were stopped.

But, as said, next year this whole policy will be reversed.

* * *

At the same time Louis XVI. — *Louis Capet*, as he is now called — is being tried by the Convention, sentenced to death, and executed Jan. 21, 1793, according to the English precedent.

A member of the Convention, a lawyer, observed, "I expected to find here an assembly of judges, and I find an assembly of accusers." Very true; and this, of course, settled Louis' fate beforehand. No doubt he had conspired!

against France; but that could never be a crime in his eyes, whose standpoint, naturally, was that of Louis XIV., — *l'État, c'est moi*, "I am the State."

The execution had no immediate consequences at all. It became of capital importance a few years afterwards, when the fact, whether a member had or had not voted the death penalty, became the test of "civism,"[1] of qualification for becoming a member of the government; which test, undoubtedly, contributed considerably to defer the accession of Louis XVIII. to the throne. But the Revolution would, probably, have run about the same course, if Louis XVI. had succeeded in escaping. His execution, however, proved this much: that the Revolution now was strong enough to carry the stroke, and that the counter-Revolution within was thoroughly crushed. In Danton's words, "the tyrant's head was thrown as a gage of battle to Europe."

The following is a report of the execution in the *Gazette de France*, a Parisian daily journal of the period, a four-page quarto paper: —

"The tyrant is no more. A terrible example has been given to the despots of the world. The axe of justice has struck down him who already was condemned by the conscience of the French people. This memorable judgment rests solely on the responsibility of the nation itself, which takes this responsibility on its shoulders. Its adversaries will never have their last hope fulfilled, — that of one day seeing the judgment reversed which has avenged it. The nation knows its enemies, — the kings of the earth; and if they pretend to demand an account of the republic for a judgment *which, by executing a king, has placed all humanity on an equal footing*, every French citizen will present himself as the responsible party.

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[1] The quality of being a good citizen, — the Jacobin version of *altruism*.

"The following were the measures that were taken in view of the execution: —

"There were strong detachments of artillery in all the public places, and strong reserves were kept in the various barracks.

"Twenty citizens, well armed, each being provided with sixteen cartridges, had been chosen by each section, every one of them being vouched for as an excellent patriot. These formed a guard of twelve hundred men, who preceded and followed Louis Capet.

"Between eight and nine in the morning the latter seated himself in the carriage of the mayor, who accompanied him, together with Edgeworth, the English Catholic priest, whose attendance he had asked for.

"The procession, commanded by Major-Gen. Santerre, followed the grand boulevards till it came to the Place de la Révolution [now called the Place de la Concorde]. Louis Capet arrived at the foot of the scaffold twenty minutes past ten. It seemed as if he wanted to address the people, when a rolling of the drums gave the signal to the executioner. At twenty-two minutes past ten he who was formerly king was no more. Deep silence and perfect stillness reigned along the route and on the Place de la Révolution. When the executioner showed the severed head to the people, cries of 'Live the nation,' 'Live the republic,' were heard from all sides. At several points were overheard these remarkable words: 'We wanted to be friends with him, and he did not want to be friends with us.'

"His body was taken to the parish church of *La Madeleine*, and buried with religious ceremonies alongside those Swiss who were killed during the 10th of August."

The words put by so many historians into the mouth of Abbé Edgeworth, at the moment of the knife falling, "Son of St. Louis, ascend to heaven!" are a pure invention.

The Convention held its sessions as usual this day. Shortly after the execution the Executive Council submitted a very laconic report, consisting of just three lines, which was adopted. Immediately thereafter a decree was passed, that a public funeral should be solemnized the following day over the body of Lepelletier, a member of the Convention, assassinated for his vote in favor of the death penalty for Louis; that the honors of a burial in the Pantheon should be accorded to it, and that the Convention should take part in a body.

CHAPTER IV.

ENERGY OF THE YEAR 1.

Jan. 22, 1793, to Sept. 21, 1793.

> "Mercier. — *Have you made a pact with Victory?*
> Bazire. — *No, but we have made a pact with Death!*"

Revolutionary Tribunal. — Committee of Public Welfare. — May 31. — Danton as Statesman. — Absolute Government. — Levy en Masse. — Danton's Resignation. — La Carmagnole.

THE solemn funeral of that noble Conventional, Lepelletier, took place on Jan. 22, the day after Louis' execution. The streets were crowded. The whole Convention and vast numbers of citizens followed to the national temple the body of that very rich, very benevolent, and very popular man, who had spent much of his time in elaborating a most generous scheme of popular education, which later on will be adopted in principle by the Convention. This solemnity may be said worthily to open the glorious spring and summer of the wonderful year 1 — as by and by the period from Sept. 22, 1792, to Sept. 21, 1793, will be styled, — glorious by their fiery energy and unbroken sunshine.

Danton had of course, as was his duty as a representative of the Convention in Belgium, faithfully carried out its two decrees of Nov. 19 and Dec. 15, 1792; he had also, as the Convention had ordered, assembled the people everywhere in primary meetings, to determine on their future government. In these primary assemblies the citizens had by an overwhelming majority voted for the incorporation of their country with the French Republic. In consequence, the Convention, on the 31st of January, 1793, on motion of Danton, decreed the annexation of Belgium ; and immediately thereupon Danton and Lacroix were, for the second time, sent into the annexed province as Representatives on Mission, this time in a purely political capacity. They staid there five weeks. Danton seemed on his return to be a more mature statesman than before. There were several matters that furnished him with food for reflection, down in the "Low Countries."

First, on departing from Paris he left his beloved wife, who had followed his career step by step with such anxiety, in a very critical condition, and on the point of giving birth to his second son.

Next, on Feb. 1, the day after his departure from Paris, the Convention declared war against Great Britain, of which intention he, of course, was cognizant. This power had already placed herself virtually in a state of war with France : she had, the day after the 10th of August, recalled her ambassador ; she detained ships loaded with corn for France, in violation of treaty ; she had prohibited the circulation of the French *assignats* within her borders ; lastly, she now prepared for open war, not at all on account of the execution of Louis, as she pretended, but because of the occupation of Belgium, which threatened her commercial interests. The open accession of Great Britain to the coalition immediately turned the tables on France, as we shall see ; and yet shortly afterwards the Convention, as if indifferent whether there was one enemy more or less, contemptuously declared war against Spain also.

That, however, which gave most food for serious thought to Danton, was the fact that these rich middle classes of Belgium, who had received him and his colleagues with open arms the first time they came, this time showed a decided hostility, and were evidently ready to take the part of the enemy if France's luck should turn; and he soon discovered the reason, to wit, that the French commissioners had put all citizens, rich or poor, on the same political footing, while they had assumed that they would be permitted to rule.

Danton had many grave discussions with Lacroix on these subjects, laid many plans, but matured particularly two, one political, the other economical, which bore fruit in the future, as we shall see.

The military position, meanwhile, was becoming very critical in Belgium. The English and Hanoverians, to the number of forty thousand, had rushed to the assistance of the Germans, and the French in consequence had to disperse themselves to form an enormous line of defence. They were steadily being driven back. Dumouriez and the representatives almost frantically demanded re-enforcements of the Convention, where the Girondins exercised power, as we should remember. The re-enforcements were promised, but they never arrived.

Danton and Lacroix returned to Paris on the 8th of March, to render a most discouraging report. Danton found his wife dead.

Camille's journal contains this reference to her death: "Danton is down in Belgium, and the cowards have profited by that absence. They have represented him as pointing out during the days of 2d and 3d of September the victims that should be assassinated. His wife has received her mortal stroke from reading in the journals this atrocious invention. Those who know how much this woman loved Danton can form an idea of her sufferings. Danton was absent, but his enemies were present in the miserable sheets that tore her heart."

She was already buried for some time, but he must see her once more. He has her body exhumed in order to gaze upon it; but when it is exposed, he actually wildly embraces it! Nothing, surely, can better show the passionate character of the man.

But after this, he again becomes the patriot, and once more rises to the height of the situation.

The next day, the 9th of March, after Lacroix has explained the situation, Danton addresses the Convention: —

"We have now several times had experience of the character of our countrymen, and have found that it is danger alone that can rouse all their energies. Well, the moment has certainly arrived. You must cry out to the whole of France, 'If you do not fly to the succor of your brethren in Belgium, if Dumouriez be surrounded, if his army be obliged to lay down arms, who can calculate the terrible consequences of such a misfortune? Our republic destroyed may mean the death and destruction of six hundred thousand Frenchmen.'

"I demand, as a first measure, that commissioners be appointed who *this very evening* shall repair to all the various sections of Paris, call the citizens together, make them take up arms, and get them to swear by their liberty that they will fly to the defence of Belgium. The whole of France will feel the rebound of such a splendid enthusiasm.

"I must add this, that our generals are not so much to blame as is supposed. You had promised them that by the 1st of February, at the latest, the army of Belgium should be increased by thirty thousand men. *They have not received one man of these.* They have told us that if they did not get re-enforcements they would perhaps have to evacuate Belgium. Let us hasten to repair our faults. May the first success of the enemy serve, as was the case last year, to rouse the nation!

"I move that commissioners be appointed *this moment.*"

That is Danton's way of doing it, and therein precisely lay his power. He does not give his countrymen time to brood over their misfortunes, and thus lose heart. He straightway has *something for them to do*, and that "this evening," "this moment," "*instantly*."

The first result is, as usual, a proclamation by the Commune, inspired by Danton: —

> "TO ARMS! CITIZENS, TO ARMS!
>
> "If you wait you are lost.
>
> "A great part of Belgium is invaded. Aix-la-Chapelle, Liège, Bruxelles, are, perhaps, now in the power of the enemy.
>
> "Parisians, it is mainly against you that this war is directed. This campaign must decide the fate of the world. We must strike terror into the kings and exterminate them. Men of July 14, Oct. 5, Aug. 10, awake!
>
> "Your brothers, your sons, pursued by the enemy, surrounded perhaps, call upon you. Arise and avenge them!
>
> "Bring all the arms you have with you to the sections. Bring all your friends with you! Swear to save the fatherland! Save it! Death to him who shall hesitate! Leave Paris to-morrow by the thousands! Now the battle is waging between men and kings, between slavery and liberty.
>
> "THE COMMUNE OF PARIS."

Meanwhile one bad report follows the other. Dumouriez has been obliged to raise the siege of Maestrict; he writes that the only means of saving Belgium is to invade Holland.

Again, on the 12th of March, Danton sounds the alarm: —

"This is not the moment to examine the causes of our disasters, but promptly to apply the remedy. When a house is on fire, I do not collar the rascals who steal the furniture, but I put out the fire. More than ever you must be convinced by the despatches from Dumouriez that you have not an instant to lose to save the republic.

"Dumouriez is not discouraged. In Holland he will find provisions in plenty. In order to conquer all our enemies he needs but Frenchmen, and France is full of them. Do we want to be free? If we do not, then let us perish, for we have sworn so: if we do, let us rush to defend our independence. Let Holland be conquered for liberty, and even the commercial aristocracy which in this moment dominates the English people, will rise up and overthrow this stupid ministry, which believes that the talents of the ancient *régime* can stifle the genius of that liberty which now hovers over France. When that ministry is overthrown in the very interests of commerce, the party of liberty in England [Fox and his party] will come again to the surface, for it is by no means dead.

"Let, then, your commissioners set out for the departments. Sustain them by your energy. Let them depart *this evening, this very night.* Let them say to the rich, 'Either the aristocracy of Europe, thrown down by our efforts, must pay our debts, or *you* must do it. The people has only blood, and it is prodigal with it; be up, then, miserable men, and be prodigal with your riches!' [Violent applause.] What! you have a whole nation for lever, and reason for fulcrum, and you have not yet overthrown the world! [Still more applause.] I put aside all private passions as totally foreign to me; I know only passion for the public good. You tire me with your personal quarrels, instead of busying yourselves about the republic. I repudiate you all as traitors to the fatherland. What do I care for my reputation? *If but France become free, let my name be accursed!* What do I care if they call me a drinker of blood? Well, let us drink the blood of the enemies of humanity, if so it must be!

"Some seem to fear that sending some of us away as commissioners may weaken one or the other party in the Convention. What vain fears! The position of the masses is a most cruel one. Our paper money is no longer at *par;*

the workman's daily wages are below the necessaries of life. We have to find a great corrective remedy. Let us conquer Holland! Let us bring the republican party in England again to life! Let us cause France to advance, and we shall go to posterity with glory! Let us fulfil our grand destiny! No debates, no quarrels, and the fatherland is saved!"

That was Danton's leading idea in that moment, — by carrying the war into Holland, and inflicting severe losses on the English, to enable Fox and the Whigs, who were ready to conclude peace with France, to hurl Pitt and the Tories from power.

However, amidst this feverish activity, Danton is haunted by the remembrance of the terrible days of last September. He is anxious to deprive the populace of all excuse for perpetrating any more lawless murders, before they hurl themselves against the enemies. Therefore, when, at the close of the day, the Convention, worn out by excitement and discussions, was about to separate, Danton once more rushed to the Tribune, and commenced with his stentorian voice: —

"I summon all good citizens not to leave their seats. [All sit down, and a profound silence reigns, adds the report.] What, citizens! in this critical moment, when, if Gen. Miranda be beaten, — and that is not impossible, — Dumouriez will be obliged to lay down his arms, can you adjourn without having voted the great measures demanded by the public welfare?

"Everywhere the enemies of liberty raise their audacious heads. There is nothing more difficult than to define a political crime. Surely, then, extraordinary laws are needed to frighten malecontents, and to strike the guilty. I see no middle way between ordinary forms and a Revolutionary Tribunal; and as some in this assembly have ventured to recall those bloody days that have torn the hearts of all good citizens, I now declare, that, if there at that time had existed a tribunal, the people whom you so continually, so cruelly charge with those days, would not have had that blood on their heads. I declare, and all who witnessed these terrible events will bear me out, that no human power could have stemmed the tide of national vengeance.

"Let us, then, do now what the Legislative Body in its time failed to do. Let us organize a tribunal; *not a good one, — that is impossible, — but the least bad one* we can think of, so that the sword of the *law* shall be suspended over the heads of all who are guilty.

"I therefore demand that a Revolutionary Tribunal be organized at *this sitting*, so that the executive power, after we have re-organized it, be possessed of all the requisite means of action and energy."

He spoke, observe, of the "tide of national vengeance." Undoubtedly in these words he gave expression to his deepest convictions as to the state of the people's mind at the time. He found a deep-seated hatred in the masses towards their former rulers, — a feeling in no wise of his doing, or in which he partook; but he believed, that, in order to keep the reins of the revolutionary movement, it was absolutely necessary to recognize this feeling as a fact. The best thing, then, under the circumstances, to do, was to prevent this hatred from acting blindly. He therefore intended that this "national vengeance" *should exercise some discretion*, *some choice*, in regard to its victims, and to that end he did the best he knew.

That he acted in good faith, and that he was himself free from these miserable vindictive passions, he clearly showed a few days after by this reproof: "Citizens, I wish you would not be always so terribly anxious to find guilty persons." Nevertheless, the day will come for Danton to ask pardon of God and men for having created this tribunal.

He gave the impulse to it; by and by it acquired such a momentum that he could not stop it when he thought it was time. But the question still remains, whether the establishment of this tribunal was not, at the time and under the given circumstances, highly expedient.

These propositions of Danton were adopted under the most enthusiastic applause; and that evening the theatres were closed, and a black flag hoisted on the Hôtel de Ville as a sign that the fatherland was in danger.

* * *

But at the very same sitting that brought forth the above important results, Danton had made another far-reaching proposition. We heard him incidentally speak of "reorganizing" the executive power. That is one of the plans he had matured down in Belgium; and it is his experience as a Representative on Mission that gave rise to it, and the question of the *volunteers* furnished the principal motive.

We have seen with what energy Danton had, the preceding year, hurried volunteers to the front; with what alacrity the people had responded. It was these volunteers that had defended French soil, and driven the enemy out of France; and it was they, for the greater part, that had invaded Belgium and Savoy. Among the stirring events at the close of 1792, none was more remarkable than the ease with which civilians, without military training or discipline, had, when their country was invaded, and its regular army disorganized and demoralized, turned soldiers. But the generals and their staffs on the frontiers did not receive the volunteers with open arms. These generals, of whom there were eight, — and of whom Dumouriez was undoubtedly the ablest, and a German, ex-Prince de Hesse, curiously enough, the most devoted to the Revolution, — all, with the exception of Westermann, the hero of Aug. 10, belonged to the old nobility and the old *régime;* and so did their staffs. No wonder they constantly quarrelled with their revolutionary superiors in Paris. They pretended that two years were needed to make a soldier; while the republican chiefs retorted, "Oh, yes! two years in peace and in barracks; but three months are enough in war, and in front of the enemy." These generals overwhelmed the ministry of war with complaints of the cowardice and the lack of discipline of the volunteers; while the true cause of their annoyance was the republican spirit of these volunteers, and the real trouble the insubordination, the intrigues, and aristocratic insolence of the generals, and the rapacity and corruption of the army contractors. For these volunteers that had been rushing to the front since the month of August, in response to the call of the Parisian commissioners, with what clothes they had on their bodies, had passed the winter, though conquerors, in rags,[1] without shoes, often without bread, and, what was worse, often without weapons and ammunition. When, then, on top of that, they were despised and insulted by their officers, shot without mercy for the most venial fault, and placed at the most exposed posts if they demanded to be led against the enemy, it is no wonder that the enthusiasm of some among them was cooled.

Yes, the contractors, they were certainly the greediest lot that ever was seen. They evidently looked upon the new republic as the golden age for rascals; and they could do pretty much as they pleased, for the inspectors and quartermasters, whose duty it was to protect the soldiers, nearly all also dated from the old *régime*, despised the new, and went about publicly saying that the Convention was imbecile, — which was true to some extent as long as the Girondins were in power, — and that, at all events, the new machinery would never work. And so the contractors stole and divided, — stole on the price, the quality, and quantity. They bought corn, not for the armies, but for speculation, and had it carried all over France at public expense. At the Army of the Alps, the Jew, Benjamin Jacob, charged thirty-four cents per pound for meat, — just double the market price, — and declared cynically, that, since "morals" to him meant to gain as much as possible, it was so much the worse for the republic. At the Army of the North, the priest d'Espagnac, the prince of stock-jobbers, had obtained the contract for carting, which he transferred to Masson & Co. for a consideration of some thousands of francs *per day*.

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[1] Hence the graphic epithet, *sans-culottes*, "trouserless."

And the ministry of war itself was surrounded and manned with rascals from the old *régime*. Even the messengers managed to make ten thousand francs a year. It was impossible to approach the minister, even with orders, without paying for the privilege. When he made an appointment it never would reach the citizen selected, before somebody's palm was greased. It may thus be comprehended how they had to bleed who solicited places. And it became still worse under the dominion of the Girondins in the Convention; for every day they arrived with their pockets full of petitions for places for their children, fathers, relatives, and friends, or friends of their mistresses.

Meanwhile the generals and officers at the front corresponded with their noble friends in the enemy's camp, and snapped their fingers at the minister who was so far away, and who had no power to introduce among them officers from the volunteers.

There certainly was need for "re-organizing the executive power," and this is Danton's great plan in the political field which he discussed with Lacroix in Belgium, and which now, on this same twelfth day of March, he *suggests*. It is a plan so opposed to the cherished notions of almost everybody, that he ventures to bring it out only in a tentative way, and that, even while yet its scope is but half understood, it fills both Girondins and Mountain with alarm. His plan is to elect, from the body of the Convention, a committee that shall have most extraordinary powers, — none less than full control over ministers, generals, and, in fact, all executive officers of the government. It is the only one of Danton's great propositions that is not accepted on the spot. It is referred to a committee for consideration, and about three weeks thereafter we shall hear more of it. Meanwhile much happens that makes the proposition more acceptable to the Convention, and which also greatly influences the future of France and of Danton.

Paris, the undaunted capital, in the days immediately following this stormy session, rushed against the enemy. Volunteers, upon the appeal of the commissioners, seemed to rise up out of the ground. On the 18th of March Danton and Lacroix were sent, for the third and last time, to Belgium, in order to try by their personal efforts to bring order into affairs, and also to persuade Dumouriez to retract an insolent letter he had written to the Convention, but which Danton had persuaded the Committee on Correspondence for the present to keep secret. He felt that this was not the time when France could dispense with the general's talents.

But things had suddenly taken a much worse turn. Just as Dumouriez had, by the one battle of Jemappes, conquered Belgium, so he had, on the very day they left Paris, by one decisive battle at Neerwinden, against the Prince of Cobourg, lost it. The representatives met, all along their route, large numbers of soldiers who were deserting, but whose flight they succeeded in checking. Danton then met Dumouriez, and succeeded in obtaining from him a few lines, praying the Convention to await his personal explanation of his previous letter. That note Danton had in his pocket when he came back to Paris on March 29. But meanwhile the Convention had despatched four special commissioners to arrest Dumouriez, and bring him to Paris. He refused to be arrested, threw the commissioners into prison, and fled then himself over to the enemy. But not a single one of his soldiers could he prevail upon to desert with him: they, on the contrary, fired after him as he sped away, but without hitting him.

This desertion was a terrible blow to France and to Danton. The worst consequence of all was the terrible strength which popular suspicion, first aroused by the discovery of Mirabeau's corruption, now attained against every prominent man except Robespierre and Marat. Their popularity, indeed, fed upon it, — especially Marat's, for he had for a long time prophesied Dumouriez' treason, — and that was another disastrous result. There is this to be said in favor of this general: that, up to the moment of his desertion, he had served France with all of his ability. He had not in all been loyal to the Convention, but he had been loyal to France, — a fact in his favor, which those who compare his treason to that of Bazaine should remember. He had won victories for her as long as he could; and now at last, when he had to give way to superior numbers, he simply did not choose to trust his head to the Convention, whose Girondin majority undoubtedly had contributed to his reverses, in not sending him the re-enforcements that had been promised him, and which he had been unceasingly clamoring for.

But now, and probably in consequence of these very disasters, Danton's important suggestion comes to the front. On the 1st of April, Isnard, a Girondin, reports, from the committee that has been examining it, a bill which creates such an executive committee as Danton proposed, to consist of nine members, and which is to have power to dismiss any executive or administrative agent, of whatever character, and wholly control them.

Danton thereupon speaks as follows: —

"We need an extraordinary extension of power, and strong measures, to save the Commonwealth. It is necessary to try to bring an agency into existence that shall be fatal to kings. We all have come to the conviction, that if we *are to create armies, and find new, able chiefs for them*, a power must be created, always subject to the Convention; and which it can undo when it pleases. I believe that, though a republic should proscribe dictators and decemvirs, it nevertheless has the right, and even the duty, to create, on occasion, a terrible authority. Do not be misled by fears of *usurpation!* Who, among us, could make himself a usurper? Look at that man [Dumouriez], who has won victories for France, and who yet has turned all Frenchmen against himself! Let us unite fraternally; it is needed for the salvation of us all."

By "proscribing dictators" Danton undoubtedly meant *irresponsible dictators*. This very proposition of his, as well as one greater still which he will make later on, clearly showed that democracy, in his mind, did not exclude a temporary virtual dictatorship, provided the dictator was made responsible at stated times.

A few days after, the bill was made a law.

What an important measure! For this "new executive power," thereby created, is to become the terrible *Committee de Salut Public*, of "*Public Welfare*," to which France is indebted for its victories and existence.

This committee was first composed of nine members, periodically re-elected. On April 7 the first committee was appointed, and remained unchanged for three months. Its members were Danton, Lacroix, Treilhard, Cambon, Barère, and four others. Danton became, by the unanimous choice of the committee, its president, and thereby was, during the summer of '93, virtually the French government. While he was in power, no one, inside or outside of the Convention, thought the hand of the committee too heavy. As an evidence of his mild rule may be noted his pleading in the Convention, on May 12, for the Vendeans, already then in revolt: "There are among the rebels men who are simply misled. We must not drive these to despair. I demand that you order that the severe penalties decreed by you shall apply only to those who have commenced or fanned the revolt." It was so ordered.

By these various measures, as also by the diplomatic negotiation, soon to be mentioned, which Danton carried on, the disasters on the frontier were checked, and France had a breathing-spell.

* * *

We now come to what is known as the revolution of the 31st of May, though it was really not accomplished till two days afterwards, the 2d of June; to wit, the forcible ejectment of thirty-two Girondin members of the Convention, and the consequent *suspension* of the rule of the Girondin party and of the plutocrats, in the Convention and in France. Danton took a prominent part in that event also.

It was an act of absolute necessity. As Carlyle says, "The Convention had to purge out its argumentative Girondins before it could rule at all." They were nothing but talkers, — many of them splendid talkers, undoubtedly, but absolutely incompetent to govern France in such a critical state of affairs, — and yet they positively refused to allow those who were competent, to do the work. This is the most damnable part of the indictment against them: that they cared nothing for the Revolution and for France if they could not be masters, and carried their insensate opposition to such an extent that they did not recoil from raising the standard of open revolt when they had been dethroned.

The Girondins in the Convention were, as we have seen, republican middle-class men, many of them lawyers. As republicans they had done good service, in company with Danton, in establishing the republic; but they were not democrats. On the contrary, they felt more than contempt, they had an aversion, for the masses, who filled them with terror. They had none of the effusive warm-heartedness of Diderot, but imitated the dazzling, sneering levity of Voltaire, which they carried to a, for serious people, most offensive length, on preparing, later on, for the scaffold. Then, as true middle-class men, they had their narrow formulas in politics, horror for centralization; and in economics, *laissez-faire*, unrestricted private enterprise, — formulas which they would permit nothing, not even absolute necessity, to set aside: and yet the moment had just come when these formulas had to be flung aside temporarily.

The immediate cause that compelled their removal was their fanatical hatred of the Parisian delegation, and especially of Danton. They, however, had no reasonable ground for hating him, or even for bearing any ill-will to him. Danton respected them, had even love for many of them, bore, always cheerfully, testimony to the talents of them all, and considered them honest but incapable men in practical affairs. We have seen him taking his seat in that part of the Convention called the Plain, the Centre, and as its chief try to unite the two wings, Girondins and Mountain. He never tired, from first to last, of preaching concord to them, of imploring them to stop their quarrels. He afterwards said to Garat, made minister of justice by the Girondins, "Twenty times I have offered them peace. They have refused to have faith in me, in order that they might crush me."

Now, why should they want to crush him? They pretended it was because he was the guilty instigator of the September massacres, a charge which has been proven a falsehood. This pretence, indeed, was nothing less than impudent, since they were decidedly more responsible for not stopping these massacres than he was. No, the true reason was envy. He stood head and shoulders above them all in ability, and that they could not bear. If they had allied themselves with him, they knew, from the experience they had had during the invasion, that he would be their master and director, and that they could still less bear; and least of them all could that vainest and most ambitious of women, Madame Roland, their priestess, — yes, *their* "goddess of liberty," — bear it.

Many a sitting was spent with their recriminations; but hitherto the most exciting of them all had been that of April 1, when Lasource, one of their number, in a most shameful fashion, and without a particle of proof, attacked Danton's honor and probity in regard to funds expended in Belgium, and when the former went to the ridiculous extent of accusing him of having conspired with Dumouriez to deliver France to her enemies, and re-establish royalty. Then Danton at length took up the glove of battle thrown at him, left his seat as chief of the Centre, and joined the Mountain for good, to the latter's immense joy.

Several times thereafter he, nevertheless, offered them truce, but they would not have it. No, they went yet much farther. They committed the unpardonable blunder of *first attacking the safety of members of the Convention*, — a fact that should always be borne in mind when the "Terror" is spoken of. They first of all insisted on formally accusing one of their number, and dragging him before the Revolutionary Tribunal; that member was Marat.

"*Do not mutilate the Convention!*" Danton then implored of them; and he certainly did not love Marat. But their hatred rose superior to every other consideration. Marat was taken before the Tribunal, triumphantly acquitted, and carried back on people's shoulders to his seat.

Bear in mind, that these miserable personal attacks went on from day to day in the most critical time of the history of France, and blocked all business. It certainly was time that energetic patriots resolved to put an end to it; and Danton, with his usual energy, led in the matter.

He drafted a petition, which the Commune presented to the Convention on May 31, praying for the exclusion of thirty-two members, naming them. He had his friend Hérault de Séchelles occupy the chair on the decisive day, the 2d of June. On that day a hundred thousand Parisians, "in insurrection," and thoroughly armed, surrounded the Convention, and refused to allow a single member to leave, or themselves to budge an inch, before the thirty-two Girondins had been ejected.

Then an unexpected scene was enacted, that again shows Danton's generosity and unselfishness. Garat rose, and proposed to imitate the example of Aristides, who ostracized himself for his country's good; that is to say, that an equal number of Jacobins and Girondins should voluntarily renounce their membership. "There yet will remain talent enough in the Convention to save the republic," he pleaded.

Danton immediately accepted. "I offer myself," he said with tears in his eyes, "as the first, and am willing to go to Bordeaux to stay as a hostage;" but Robespierre objected, and so nothing came of the generous idea.

Then the thirty-two Girondins were removed. They, however, were not arrested, but for a long time moved about freely in Paris. It was only after a number of them had raised rebellion in many of the departments against the

Convention, that they, and sixty-three sympathizers who had signed a protest against their exclusion, were ordered to be arrested, and finally, as many as could be got hold of, executed. But no one tried so hard to save them from that fate as Danton.

By that "revolution" the rule of the plutocrats is suspended for fourteen months, and the Mountain, the Jacobin party, is in unlimited power during that period; that is to say, from June 2, 1793, to July 28, 1794.

* * *

Since Danton during these summer months is the virtual ruler and guardian of France, this is a good time to consider his title to statesmanship. Already, while he was merely an agitator, we have found him to be very much wiser than any other public man, even than Mirabeau, as to the form of government suitable to France under the changed circumstances. His experience in Belgium, and the responsibilities thrown upon him, undoubtedly mature him very much. I think it can be claimed for him that he is not only the only statesman of the First French Republic, but that he is the greatest statesman of the Revolution; that he had not only a deep insight into human nature, but that especially he had a clear view of the terribly complex situation of France, and the fundamental necessities consequent thereon. That he was a statesman of first rank is evident from the truly tremendous feat he performed of *stemming and finally reversing the foreign policy of the Convention* hitherto prevailing.

We have seen what that policy was, — *the war for propaganda,* — and how enthusiastically it was pursued both by the Girondin majority and by nearly all of the Jacobin party. To have such a policy reversed was certainly an herculean task. Moreover, that policy was afterwards taken up by the party of Hébert, who for some months during the autumn became the most influential person, and strenuously pressed; but Danton remained the victor.

That he never approved of the war for propaganda, though he did not denounce it while excitement ran high, and though he as Representative on Mission executed the decrees of the 19th of November and 15th of December, as was his duty, is evident from the simple fact that he never ceased diplomatic negotiations.

For more than a year, from Aug. 10, 1792, to, say, Sept. 15, 1793, he directed the foreign relations of France, and during that time he never for a moment ceased to negotiate, though he did not speak of it publicly — to have told, from the Tribune of the Convention or the Jacobins, that he negotiated with kings, "those monsters," would have been folly; yet to maintain diplomatic relations was to ignore the idea of war for propaganda. He all the time had diplomatic agents everywhere, even, as we saw, with the invading armies. Having a clear view of the situation, he feared that France alone could not cope with the coalition, and so he tried to create a diversion behind Prussia and Austria by using Turkey, the Polish patriots, and Sweden; though he actually did effect a treaty of alliance with the latter country, these attempts did not amount to much. Much more successful were his efforts to sow discord between the States in war with France. At Vienna and at Berlin he was in constant connection with the adversaries of the Austro-Prussian alliance, and it is to this very success that was due the breathing-spell France had after the desertion of Dumouriez.

But most important of all were his relations with the opposition in the British Parliament; that is to say, with Fox and the Whigs, with whom he was in constant and intimate relations. By their help he tried first all he could to prevent Great Britain from joining the coalition, and afterwards to detach her from it. That was why the defection of Dumouriez was such a blow, in particular to him, for this general had been used to go between him and the commander of the British army, as well as the British ambassador at The Hague. Indeed, the fortune of Danton very much depended upon the success or failure of Fox; if Pitt were overthrown, and Fox rose to power, England, it was understood, would retire from the coalition, and acknowledge the French Republic, which in turn would evacuate Belgium and Savoy. Fox tried very hard to accomplish this; Lord Belford came *incognito* to Paris, in these spring months of '93, to confer with Danton. Motion after motion was made in the House of Commons, but none of them would succeed. Danton personally did not reap the fruit of all these labors, but France did; for it was this policy of Danton which the Committee *de Salut Public* finally adopted, and which ended in the peace concluded in 1795.

Danton was then certainly all the time an antagonist of the idea of war for propaganda; but it was not till March, '93, that he found it judicious to be it openly and fearlessly, and his success was immediate and decisive. The Girondins were dumfounded by his boldness. Brissot, one of the most prominent among them, says, in his last letter to his constituents, "You may form an idea of the liberty of opinion, enjoyed in the Convention, from the fact that Danton alone, or only supported by two or three of his party, could make, without being howled down, *a motion for repealing the decree of the 19th of November*. We must do him the justice to admit that he did it cleverly."

On the 13th of April Robespierre had made some motion or other, when Danton rose and spoke: —

"It is time, citizens, that the National Convention should teach Europe that France knows how to infuse prudence in its politics.

"You have in a moment of enthusiasm, certainly led by noble motives, decreed that you were ready to help all nations who would oppose resistance to oppressive tyrants. *By virtue of that decree you might be called upon to assist patriots who would rebel in China.*

"*But surely above all it becomes us to take care of ourselves,* and do our best to make France great. Make the republic strong, and *France will influence other nations by her example and attainments.*

"Let us therefore now decree that *we do not want to mix ourselves into the affairs of our neighbors.*"

Immediately the Convention resolves, —

"The National Convention declares, in the name of the French people, that it will in no manner intermeddle with the government of other nations; but it at the same time declares that it will sooner bury itself under its own ruins than suffer another power to intermeddle with the internal affairs of the republic."

This is the first but decisive blow to the idea of the war for propaganda. But Danton and his friends follow it up.

When, on the 26th of April, Robespierre went back to the ideas of the decree of Nov. 19, and proposed to insert in the preamble to the new constitution such phrases as these, "He who oppresses one nation, thereby declares himself the enemy of all;" "Kings and aristocrats are rebels against the sovereign of the earth, Humanity, and against the legislator of the universe, Nature," Robert, the Parisian delegate and Dantonist, objects: —

"Let us leave to philosophers to analyze humanity in all its relations; *we are not the representatives of humanity.* I want that French legislators should forget the universe for the present, and occupy themselves with the affairs of their country. . . . I do not care to examine what is the nature of man in general, but what is the character of the French people."

Finally the Jacobin Constitution, promulgated Aug. 10, 1793, solemnly affirmed, in its 119th article, —

"The French people will never interfere with the government of other nations, nor suffer other nations to interfere with its own government."

The second mischievous policy which Danton had to combat, and which he with equal success overcame, in this case supported by the greater part of the Mountain, was the *Federalism* of the Girondins, and after their fall, like the previous one, adopted by the Hébertists. That word meant in France the very reverse of what it designated in the United States at the same period; to wit, autonomy of the departments and communes, a loosening of the bond of political unity which was one of the three grand objects that the Revolution of '89 had accomplished.

That the Girondists favored that policy was a natural result from the liberty which *they* meant and worshipped, — middle-class liberty; this: not to be restrained at all. From demanding such liberty for their persons and their class, it was only a step to demanding liberty for their localities, where they, of course, could rule by virtue of the influence they possessed through their wealth. Another motive was the hatred they felt for the population of Paris, that had a most wholesome contempt for their imbecility. Paris has, all through French history, exercised a predominant influence, and justly so. The spirit that animated Paris has never been a local one at all, but national, and that because she is a truly representative city, one which the strongest minds from every nook and corner of France make their home, at least for a period. London is just that kind of a city for England, though not in the same degree, while America does not possess that kind of a city at all.

It was a great merit in Danton that he opposed that policy, and maintained the unity of France with all the force of his character; for at an earlier period, as agitator, he had prated more about "liberty" than any one. But as he matured, as responsibility fell on him, "*la patrie*," the fatherland, France, secured a higher claim on his allegiance; and for France, at that moment especially, when she was in a death-struggle, to have relaxed her unity, would have been madness. These were his memorable words: "As for me, I am not a child of Paris. I was born in a department toward which I always turn an affectionate and longing eye. But no one of us belongs to this or that department: we all belong to the whole of France. Stop, then, these discussions, and let us devote ourselves to the public welfare. . . . It is said that there are among us men who wish to cut France into pieces. Let us destroy these absurd ideas by decreeing the punishment of death against their authors. France must remain an undivided whole with an undivided representation. The citizens of Marseilles want to clasp the hands of their fellow-citizens of Dunkirk."

And he was right. If the doctrine of evolution is at all correct, nothing is surer than that progress lies in the development of larger and larger unities; and if the sentiment that moved so many among us to lay down their lives for the union of the States were not mere froth, then *it is through the nation, our country, that we enter into relation with humanity.* Between the three terms, family, country, humanity, there is a close and intimate relationship. The family is the germ of the nation, as the nation is the germ of humanity. They are three successive manifestations of human nature, three stages of the same idea; a realization, more and more complete, of the law of our being, of the plan that is to be worked out through us. Either these three ideas are all sacred, or not one is so.

Danton was just a statesman because he was a disciple of Diderot. As such he had a profound contempt for metaphysical dreams, and had a clear perception of what was possible. It is therefore a most egregious mistake to think that Danton was only a destroyer. He was *the most constructive mind of all the public men of the Revolution*, and as constructive as it was possible to be at the threshold of a transition period. His programme was the true programme of the Revolution; that is to say, —

Substitution of popular sovereignty for absolutism;
Maintenance of order sufficient to resist re-action;
Facilities for the greatest development of industry;
Free development of science and philosophy; and hence:
Separation of Church and State.

He was certainly, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, a middle-class man, but it was precisely a merit in a leader of France *at that time* to be that thoroughly; but he was more than that, he was a middle-class man with a heart for the masses.

In a few words, he wanted such a republic as that which recently had been established in the United States of America, but with unity.

* * *

So from the 2d of July the Jacobins were masters of France. That they did not lose a moment in carrying out their social ideas, we shall see in the next chapter. Here will be shown, how they solved the problem of the salvation of, and security for, France; for the breathing-spell she had enjoyed was now at an end, and new, terrible dangers threatened.

Four short days after the revolution of the 2d of June, it was learned that more than sixty out of the eighty-three departments had risen against their authority, and threatened to overpower Paris, the Convention, and the whole one and indivisible republic. At the word of the ejected Girondins Marseilles revolts; Lyons sends Chalier, its Jacobin leader, to the scaffold; Toulon imprisons patriots, and parleys with the English; Montpellier, Bordeaux, and Nantes proclaim loudly that they are ready to take up arms; Caen, in the north-west, which a month hence will send forth the young Girondin woman Charlotte Corday, with her dagger destined for Marat's heart, is already organizing a small army.

Then Danton once more infuses courage and energy into France by his words — now rising in the former royal theatre of the palace of the Tuileries, into which the Jacobin Convention has just moved from the riding-school behind the palace: —

"We are in the midst of storms; the thunder rolls. It is in the midst of these clashings that the work will be done that will immortalize the French nation. They claim that it is the insurrection of Paris that causes these movements in the departments. I declare, in the face of the universe, that the events of May 31 and July 2 constitute the glory of this superb city. I proclaim, in the face of France, that without the cannon and the insurrection the conspirators would have triumphed. We are willing, then, to face the whole responsibility resulting therefrom. I myself incited to the rising of the people by saying, that, if there were in the Convention a hundred men like me, we should overcome the conspiracy, and found liberty on immovable foundations. Do not mind the addresses, full of calumnies, against Paris, which the conspirators have sent to the departments; they are no new thing. Paris remains the centre, where every thing must concentrate. Paris is the focus that will gather all rays of French patriotism, which will consume our enemies."

And action followed. The committees of the Convention went to work. Special commissioners, with peace or war in the folds of their mantles, overran the departments. They appeared in the midst of their rebellious countrymen in the prescribed costume of a Representative on Mission : a round hat with three feathers of the national colors, a scarf, and in a black-leather belt a naked sword, — the avenging sword of the republic. They talked a few stern words, and they conquered. *In three days* they pacified France. Says one of the rebels, "The seventy-two departments which had declared themselves for us turned round, and abandoned us in the course of twenty-four hours." The Girondins were everywhere fleeing.

Then came, a month after, the murder of Marat, which sent a thrill of horror through Paris. It was really a misfortune, for it roused all the very worst passions, and brought to the front Hébert, a worse man than Marat. The latter died with twenty-one cents in his possession, his whole wealth ; and it was this unselfishness that made sincere tears flow down the cheeks of most patriots while his body was being taken, a couple of days after, to the Pantheon, from which the bones of Mirabeau had previously been ignominiously ejected. David made a splendid bust of Marat, a copy of which was placed in the hall of every primary assembly of France. One can be seen to-day in a museum in Paris, of which the eyes seem to flash fire.

The black clouds thickened over France, till the greatest intensity was reached July 25, on which day Danton was appointed president of the Convention, an office filled by rotation. At that moment the northern frontier was overrun by the united British and Austrians, who bombarded Valenciennes ; the Prussians entered the heart of Alsace ; the British flag floated over Toulon ; Condé had just surrendered ; Mayence capitulated, but the garrison departed with all the honors of war (on condition of not serving against the enemy for a year), headed by Merlin of Thionville, Representative on Mission, who, when some one among the spectators uttered an insulting word, imperiously cried out, "Have a care! we are coming back." Lastly, the rebellious Vendeans had just at the same time dispersed the republican army, commanded by Rossignol.

All these disasters became known in Paris, one after another, at the end of the month of July. The situation was terrible. Labor was paralyzed, commerce dead; in Paris itself was famine. The *assignats* were falling in value, and the Convention in a death-struggle with counterfeiters, the last miserable guise of the counter-revolutionists. The soldiers were without bread and shoes; of powder there was none. Some heroic remedies were imperatively needed. On the 2d of August Danton ascended the Tribune and provided one, and a few days after another, and thereby, *for the third time* and finally, saved France and the Revolution.

"The peril is imminent," he said, "but our people are determined. Since it is to be war, let us be terrible; let us make war like lions! Let us boldly *establish a 'Revolutionary Government'* that can utilize the whole national energy for gigantic measures. *I declare it as my firm intention not to be a member of such a government.* I want to be always free to spur on those who carry on the government; in other words, what I demand to-day is, that *ministers shall from this moment be simply the chief clerks of this Revolutionary Government.* I add this other demand: that fifty million francs be placed at its disposal, for which funds it shall render account when its mission is at an end, but with power of spending the sum in one single day, if thought expedient. Let us be extravagantly prodigal for the cause of liberty, and it will be returned to us a hundred-fold. It would be shameful for us if the haughty minister[1] of a despot should have superior resources and a larger purse than those charged with the regeneration of the world."

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[1] William Pitt.

Then and there that "Revolutionary Government," — an absolute government, — the new Committee *de Salut Public* was created, that became the terror of Europe. When he had proposed the first committee, the proposition had been listened to in alarm, it had been delayed and discussed ; now, when a far more centralized power — a *dictatorship*, in fact — was proposed, a step, be it known, that involved the suspension of the new constitution (of which more in the following chapter), that had just been voted by the Convention, and which the people were even then making preparations for sanctioning enthusiastically and with festivities, it was adopted on his mere proposal. But then, he had himself worked the first committee; his spirit was to be absent from the second.

This "Revolutionary Government" disposed of all the national forces; it appointed and dismissed the ministers, generals, Representatives on Mission, the judges and juries of the Revolutionary Tribunal. The latter instrument became its strong arm; it was, in fact, a court martial worked by civil magistrates. By its agents it directed the departments and armies, the political situation without and within, striking down at the same time the rebels within and the enemies without: for, together with the constitution, were, of course, suspended the municipal laws and the political machinery of the communes; and thus cities and villages hitherto indifferent or opposed to the Revolution were republicanized. By the Tribunal it disposed of the persons of individuals; by requisition and the law of *maximum* (with which we are going to be better acquainted) it disposed of their fortunes. It can, indeed, be said that the whole of France was placed in a state of siege; but that was the price of its salvation, as in some countries it may be the indispensable price of salvation of society when the *Coming Revolution*, the last revolution, occurs.

There can be no doubt now that it was the intention of the coalition, in 1793, to dismember France. Not one of the States that composed it seriously proposed, as the exclusive aim of the war, to save or revenge Louis XVI. Every one of them expected a piece of the country. Austria wanted Flanders, Lorraine, and Alsace; Prussia wanted some contiguous strips; England, Dunkirk; Sardinia, Provence; and Spain, Roussillon. Even royalist writers have been honest and patriotic enough to admit that. Thus a modern diplomat, M. de Bourgoing, writes, —

"If the Jacobins had been conquered, France would have fallen with them; and the miserable fate of Poland teaches us but too plainly what would have been in reserve for us. Foreign nations would have trampled us pitilessly under foot, and, to save themselves remorse, would have reproached us, as they did the Poles, with our internal divisions; one part of us with their crimes, the other part with their appeals to foreigners. Those who always glorify success would have loudly proclaimed that we deserved our fate."

And that still more renowned Catholic writer, De Maistre, frankly admits, "Once the Revolution given, *France could not possibly have been saved except by Jacobinism.*"

* * *

And now Danton created the second heroic means of salvation. It was the levy *en masse.*

It has been said that the people prepared themselves to celebrate by festivities the completion and adoption of that constitution which had been suspended before the people had even sanctioned it. But, nevertheless, they met in their eight thousand primary assemblies, and adopted it with remarkable unanimity. Each primary assembly further appointed a delegate; and these eight thousand delegates went to Paris, and on the 10th of August, that now had become the great national holiday, on the first anniversary of the fall of the monarchy, celebrated a new "Feast of Federation," much more remarkable than its prototype of July 14, 1790.

A wonderful people! to witness theatrical displays, and give themselves over to festivities, in the darkest hour of their history, with their fate as a nation trembling in the balance; in a situation for which Anglo-Saxons would have fortified themselves with fasting and prayer!

The whole population of Paris, the eight thousand delegates, and the Convention in a body, that had chosen for president of the occasion Hérault de Séchelles, took part in the "feast." It commenced at sunrise at the Place de Bastille, and ended at sunset round the altar of the country on the Champ de Mars, by swearing the oath of fidelity. The next day the Convention held a sitting, when the eight thousand delegates (or as many, I suppose, as could find room) were admitted to the bar of the Convention; and it was then that Danton made his other supreme effort.

"You, the envoys of the primary assemblies of France," he said, "should be empowered, by the Convention that grasps the thunderbolt of the nation, to draft those citizens whose enthusiasm is lagging behind into the service of the country. By joining the apostleship of liberty to the rigor of the law we shall create an immense force. I hereby ask the Convention to give these delegates most direct and extensive powers to levy recruits. If each of these eight thousand men sends to the front twenty men, the fatherland is saved. I demand, further, that besides being invested with ample powers of levying men, in concert with the constituted authorities and with all good citizens, they be also authorized to take an inventory of corn, and that the Committee *de Salut Public* shall direct this sublime movement. I have noted the energy of these men whom the primary assemblies have sent here, and I am convinced that they are ready to swear that they will, on returning to their homes, give an impulse to their fellow-citizens in this direction. [All delegates present rise and swear, 'Indeed, we are!'] This is the moment to take for the last time the oath, to devote ourselves to death, or to destroy our enemies. [All in the hall and galleries rise, wave their hats, and cry, 'Yes, we swear!']

"I also demand that all truly suspected persons be arrested, but add that *this measure be executed with more care than hitherto*, for, instead of seizing the great scoundrels and conspirators, many humble, innocent persons have been made to suffer. Let, then, the Convention, recently invested with new dignity from the unanimous approval just bestowed upon it by the people, empower the delegates of the primary assemblies to make requisitions of arms, provisions, and ammunition, and to levy four hundred thousand men to be sent immediately to the front."

This motion is adopted immediately. As a supplement, the Convention on the 23d of August issued the following sufficiently high-sounding decree: —

"From this time, and till the enemy is beaten, all French men are declared liable to military service, and to be drafted at any time.

"Let our young men go to battle; our married men forge arms and transport subsistence; their wives make tents and clothes, or serve in the hospitals; their children make old linen into lint; and our old men be taken to the public places, there to encourage our soldiers, and preach to them hatred of kings and the unity of the republic.

"This levy shall be a universal one. All unmarried citizens and childless widowers between eighteen and twenty-five years of age shall go first. Let them repair to the chief places of their respective districts, and there be exercised in arms till they be required to depart for the seat of war."

And behold, it was really done!

Yes, by a simple motion this wonderful man conjured out of the ground fourteen grand armies and six hundred thousand soldiers, — these great republican armies which filled the horizon of Europe for the next twenty-five years, and with which, in particular, the great republican Jacobin generals made the decisive wars of '93 and '94 in the interior and on the frontier, in the Vendée and on the Rhine, at Lyons, at Toulon, in the Alps and the Pyrenees. The *republican Jacobin generals*, mark! Not the aristocratic royalist ones, whose imbecility was noted at the commencement of this chapter; for it was out of the very men levied by these delegates of primary assemblies that arose the renowned chiefs Jourdan, Pichegru, Marceau, Dugommier, Moreau, Joubert, Kléber, and the first among equals, Hoche. The minister, as we saw, had no power of introducing volunteers into the corps of officers; but the absolute Committee *de Salut Public* had, as it had the power of ordering the minister, its "chief clerk," to do it. It was fortunate that it secured as chief clerk, titular minister of war, a man able to carry through that most important measure, the so-called *amalgamation* of regulars and volunteers, and that man was Col. Bouchotte.

The very saddest thing in the world it is to see a man who has rendered either humanity or his country splendid services, not alone unappreciated by posterity, but depreciated and contemned. Ungratefulness is about the blackest vice posterity can be guilty of; and perhaps no man concerned with the French Revolution, next after Danton, has been wronged so much as Bouchotte. He has been styled a follower of Hébert and an imbecile. All credit for the splendid success of the armies has been given to Carnot, the eminent member of the Committee *de Salut Public*, and not a particle, of course, is given to Bouchotte. Now, it is true that Carnot is entitled to great credit: he was the organizer of their victories, since he it was who formed the plan of campaign; he was the republican Von Moltke. True it also is, that Bouchotte was not a genius: but it is the height of injustice not to admit that the most splendid plans would have availed nothing, if Bouchotte had not seconded Carnot, and especially had not *organized* those fourteen armies and six hundred thousand men; if he had not for many months toiled for sixteen hours a day in *amalgamating* these volunteers with the regular army, and used his excellent knowledge of men in appointing the right sort of new officers and generals. Every one of the renowned republican generals owed their appointment to Bouchotte, and it is a shame that honest, patriotic toil shall not have its credit, as well as talent and genius.

But, above all, there was a universal rising of the whole people. They showed an energy and felt a conviction of victory, impossible to explain. They believed the republic almighty. Forges blazed everywhere in Paris; the cells of the convent of the Chartreux filled with workmen, making a noise that might have awakened the monks, buried there a century ago. A thousand muskets were daily turned out; seven hundred bronze and thirty thousand iron cannon were made in a year. All metal was turned into cannon, muskets, and swords; the ground all over, the hearthstones, kitchen walls, were ransacked for saltpetre.

As leather was lacking, Bouchotte wanted to induce the soldiers to wear wooden shoes occasionally; but how should he make them take kindly to the suggestion? He finally concluded to send them the following circular, certainly the most remarkable communication ever sent by a war minister to his soldiers: —

"Brothers and Friends, — the Committee *de Salut Public* has ordered me to distribute to each of you a pair of wooden shoes, which you are requested to wear out of service. This resolution is a new proof of the solicitude of the committee for the well-being of the defenders of our country. Such shoes are the healthiest of all during this season: will protect your feet from dampness and cold when you rest, and equally when you march, for they will enable you to dry your other shoes; lastly, they will save the consumption of leather shoes, which has become excessive from your wear and tear and the dishonesty of the contractors, and will thus leave us time to get a better supply for the future.

"No doubt, brothers and friends, you will hasten to get a pair of these wooden shoes, and wear them whenever the service permits it. There will be no deduction made for them, except when they should get lost through your own fault.

"Your interest for the finances of the republic, and your own interests, demand that you take as much care of this foot-gear as of all other things that protect you from the rigors of the season.

"The fatherland will always look after your wants with the attention and liberality of a tender mother, mindful of your sacrifices for her; but you ought also, like careful and economical children, to neglect nothing that can save her effort and expenses."

Would it not be impossible to resist such a fraternal invitation?

But this measure did not prove sufficient; and one of the Representatives on Mission, therefore, on his own responsibility, issued the following proclamation to the citizens of Lyons: —

"Whereas wooden shoes suffice for those who stay at home, it is ordered that all citizens not employed in the service of the armies deliver up their shoes within eight days at their respective town-halls, when a receipt will be given to them."

It was done. It was imitated, and soon Paris, Strasbourg, Rennes, and other cities put their shoes at the disposition of the country's defenders. What proof of devoted self-denial!

The consequence of this wonderful enthusiasm was, that a few months thereafter the soil of France was cleared of all her enemies, and Europe in its turn stood trembling at the advance of the republican armies.

And more wonderful things yet come to be seen and heard. Listen how that terrible Jacobin Convention orders the garrisons of the fortresses of the enemy to surrender within forty-eight hours, — *and they obey!* For the first time in all history the world listens to decrees like these: that at such and such a time this town must be taken, that battle must be fought and won, — *and it is being done!* That is the sublime of it. If it had not been done, such decrees would have been ridiculous.

* * *

But Danton has committed a great mistake, — one that he, and especially France, will come to rue. *He has declined to become a member of the Revolutionary Government,* which has been established on his motion. "It is my firm resolve not to be a member of such a government," he had said. In other words, he has declined re-election as a member of the Committee *de Salut Public,* now it has been erected into a dictatorship.

He unfortunately lacked all ambition.

He hitherto had professed perfect indifference to all the false charges affecting his honor and character which the Girondins had brought against him. He constantly had repeated that his reputation was a matter of no concern. "Let my reputation be blasted, if but France be saved." But apparently he got tired of these slanders. This absolute government will have vast sums confided to its discretion, and that would give rise to future insinuations against his honesty if he accepted a place in it.

And then he had married again in July, five months after his first wife's death. This may astonish those who remember his violent sorrow at her removal from him, but it must be remembered that he had two small children who needed a mother's care; that his temperament was one that required a companion to love; that they lived fast during that stormy period, when they breathed an atmosphere of ozone, of fire, when five months corresponded to five ordinary years; lastly, it should be known that Mademoiselle Gély had been an intimate friend of Madame Danton. But she certainly was unworthy of him, as is amply shown by this fact: that she hastened to marry again after her husband's death, and tried as much as possible to hide the fact that she had been the wife of the great Danton. Possibly, as she was pious and conservative, she somewhat influenced his subsequent actions, for he loved her as tenderly as he had once loved his first wife.

At any rate, when afterwards, on Sept. 8, one Gaston tells the Convention, "Danton has a mighty revolutionary head. No one understands so well as he to execute what he himself proposes. I therefore move that he be added to the Revolutionary Government, in spite of his protest," and it is so unanimously ordered, he again peremptorily declines. "No, I will not be a member; but as a *spy* on it I intend to work."

A most fateful resignation! for while he still for a short time continues to exercise his old influence on the government, both from the outside, in his own person, and inside the committee, in the person of Hérault de Séchelles, selected in his place, he very soon loses ground more and more, — so much so even that Hérault, his friend, is "put in quarantine," as was said in the committee. And very natural. A statesman cannot have power when he shirks responsibility, and without power he soon loses all influence with the multitude.

Those who now succeed him in power are Robespierre, Barère, Billaud-Varennes, and Carnot, — the two last, very good working-members, good men of the second rank, but after Danton not a single man is left fit to be *leader.*

Ah, the significance and importance of a leader were never more apparent, and the lack more disastrous, than here! The impulse once given to affairs serves, indeed, to procure for the young republic victories on the battle-field; but otherwise the government, rudderless, drifts away from the paths marked out by Danton, and commits one excess after the other. In spite of victories, France is evidently going down, down.

* * *

As the middle classes of France had their song of victory, *Ça ira!* so the masses, the victorious Jacobins, have now theirs, *La Carmagnole.* It is during this year, '93, sung everywhere in the public places; yes, and danced! Indeed, the dance is just as important as the melody. The words are nonsensical, are, in fact, changed from day to day, but the melody and the dance have a tremendous effect on all: in the aristocrats it makes the blood congeal, and with the common people makes it run quicker. The same effect is caused even at the present time on a mere spectator, when he watches the working-people of Paris at their *réunions,* with sparkling eyes and flushed cheeks, repeat the refrain, —

"*Dāns-ons la Carmagno-le*
Vi-ve le son, vi-ve le son,
Dans-ons la Carmagno-le
Vi-ve le son du canon!"

The most popular verse of all was this: —

> "*Madam Veto avait promis* (*bis*)
> *De faire égorger tout Paris* (*bis*);
> *Mais le coup a manqué,*
> *Grace à nos canonniers.*
> *Dansons,*" etc.
>
> ("Madam *Veto*[1] had promised
> To have all Parisians killed;
> But the blow has failed,
> Thanks to our cannoneers.
> Let us dance the Carmagnole
> To the sound, to the sound,
> Let us dance the Carmagnole
> To the sound of our cannon!")

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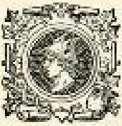
[1] The Queen.



CHAPTER V.

FRATERNITY OF THE JACOBINS.

June 2, 1793, to End of Year.

"God communicates his will to men, written in the events, an obscure text and a mysterious language. Men straightway make translations of it, — hasty, incorrect translations, full of faults, of blanks, and contradictions. The most sagacious, serene, and profound minds decipher it but slowly; and when they bring their texts, there are already twenty translations among the people. Every translation gives rise to a party, and every contradiction to a faction: and each party or faction believes it has the only true meaning. Often those in power are but a faction." — VICTOR HUGO.

CONSTITUTION OF '93. — THE MAXIMUM. — A POOR-LAW. — DOWN WITH SPECULATORS! — EDUCATION. — THE CIVIL CODE. — A GREAT WRONG. — "PRIVATE ENTERPRISE" INDISPENSABLE.

THE Jacobin Convention had to build its new temple, like the Jews after the Babylonian exile, "trowel in one hand, sword in the other." For it is the greatest possible mistake to think that the men of the Mountain were only men of violence: on the contrary, they were possessed with the idea that it was their mission to institute a new social order; and now, having their hands free, they, in that former royal theatre of the palace of the Tuileries, set to work constructing vigorously, ay, feverishly!

What a contrast between these two spheres of activities! It is difficult to comprehend that it is the same assembly, the same set of men, now fighting for existence, now fashioning a new society; that it is the same theatre of action. One moment every thing is confusion, fear, hate, suspicion: all sorts of passions violently contend for mastery. To exterminate or be exterminated, is the question. The next moment, as by the turning of a kaleidoscope, we seem abruptly removed to an academy of learning, where we hear the most ardent revolutionists discuss — in curious, high-flown periods certainly, but with remarkable moderation and gentleness — the most generous plans for bettering the condition of their fellow-creatures, and, be it noted, — for this constitutes their glory, — for bettering the condition of *classes to which not one of them belonged.* This is in itself a most curious fact: that in such a great overturning of society not one man or woman of the working classes rose to a leading position. They exercised, as we have seen, a considerable influence on events *in corpore*, in masses, and in a somewhat inarticulate fashion, but individually they remained dumb. What a modesty!

Yes, these *bourgeois* patrons and advocates did their full duty to their clients, and form in this respect the most complete contrast to the plutocrats, Girondins, and others. That which the latter should have done, and never did before or since, that the Jacobins performed to the best of their ability; and this fact raises them above every legislative assembly that ever sat in any country. They were mindful of their helpless fellow-citizens; they did "guard against gluts," and against scarcity too, and did "preside over the apportionment and distribution of wages for work done," as Carlyle has demanded of our plutocrats. That chronic evil of Paris a century ago, *famine, did not put in an appearance this winter.* In other words, though hardly sure of their heads for the space of twenty-four hours, they yet tried faithfully to realize, as a counter-weight to Individualism, FRATERNITY, which at bottom is simply the conscious, frank acknowledgment of that *interdependence* which, as a matter of fact, binds us together in society.

"But they failed; in spite of the absolute power they enjoyed for fourteen months, with none so much as to gainsay them, they failed," so say both their enemies, all reactionists, and their friends, our modern reformers; and the latter add, "*Ergo*, the French Revolution failed."

Well, in this chapter we have not to do with the whole Jacobin reign, but only with the period after June 2 in which Danton's influence was paramount. During these few months the Convention was a most noble assembly, and passed or initiated those remarkable measures that are now to be discussed. During that time the Convention was perfectly successful, remarkably successful, and really laid firmly the foundation of the new society.

Then came the fatal change: the Convention passed under the influence first of Hébert, then of Robespierre. They then became, in the words of Victor Hugo at the head of this chapter, "a faction." They then commenced to interpret "God's mysterious text" *falsely — too hastily.* More than that, they got not only a wrong conception of the will of the Power behind Evolution, a wrong conception of the social order that then and there was to be instituted in France, but they also — just because they were Frenchmen, and therefore deemed nothing gained before they had realized the last conclusion of the syllogism — were far too hasty in reducing that conception of theirs to practice. They in consequence failed, and the foundation they had laid was torn up. But when our reformers say that this implies the failure of the Revolution itself, they thereby show that they themselves share the illusion of the Jacobins; that they also have a wrong translation of "the mysterious text." They believe, as the Jacobins did when they became "a faction," that the millennium could and should have been immediately organized. The truth is, that what they started in doing, and did well, was pretty nearly all that could be done.

We have seen that the National Convention had in plenitude all powers, whether legislative, executive, or judicial. It had flung to the wind the usual middle-class formula of a "division of powers." And these powers it exercised through its committees and the commissioners it was constantly sending out into the departments and to the armies.

There were not less than twenty-two committees. The most important were, *on the Constitution*, of which Danton and Hérault de Séchelles, his intimate friend, were members; *of Public Welfare*, of which Danton ceased to form part in August; *of General Security*, which had charge of the national police, and whose first president was Hérault (this committee remained in the hands of the Dantonists as long as they had power at all, and was second in importance only to that *of Public Welfare*); *on Education*, with Lakanal for chief; *on Finance*, whose soul was Cambon, also a true friend of Danton; on *Legislation*, with Cambacérès for director; and lastly, *on War*, where Carnot had the lead. It was by the incessant labors of these committees that the Convention carried on its immense work, while breathing an atmosphere of fire.

The very first thing they did after ousting the Girondins was to perform the work for which the Convention had mainly convened, but which the danger of the country had postponed from month to month, — to frame and adopt *a new constitution*. This work, known thereafter by the name of the *Constitution of Ninety-three*, was performed with feverish haste; and though not in force for even a day, being suspended before even receiving the sanction of the people, it is important as embodying the principles that governed the Jacobins in all their measures.

From the very first there had been a Committee on the Constitution. Danton was a member of it; but the great majority were Girondins, and the principal of them the noble Condorcet. This philosopher had for a considerable time had ready the draft of a constitution, on which he had repeatedly but vainly asked the Convention to take action. After June 2 Danton resigns his membership; and in his place, as well as in that of the expelled Girondins, his friend Hérault de Séchelles and other Jacobins are elected. They take up the draft of Condorcet; make, in a couple of days, considerable changes in it, then submit it to the Committee *of Public Welfare*, where one day is devoted to examining and slightly amending it; and finally, on the 10th, the discussion of it begins in the Convention, which adopts it on June 23, — the whole work thus done in three weeks.

The differences between the draft of Condorcet and the constitution as adopted were very marked and highly suggestive.

First, as to style: the Girondin draft was dry and diffuse; the Jacobin Constitution laconic, giving the impression of gigantic letters hewn into granite and painted in warm colors. One of its first articles ran, —

"French citizens are: every foreigner of the full age of twenty-one who has resided one year in France, and lives there by his labor, or acquires landed property, or marries a French citizen, or *adopts an infant*, or *supports an old person*."

One of its last articles said, —

"The French Republic will not intermeddle with the government of foreign nations. It gives asylum to all foreigners *banished from their country* for *the cause of liberty*. *It refuses asylum to tyrants*."

But the most important difference was the spirit that pervaded the two documents from first to last.

The draft of Condorcet was the *charter of individualism*. It had no conception of *humanity*, but only of a collection of individuals, each standing aloof from, and sharply, even hostilely, opposed to others; clad to the teeth in his "rights," as in a coat-of-mail. What it concerned itself about, and was solicitous for, was to defend these individuals from oppression and interference from others. It was a scheme of *guaranties*. It guaranteed the liberty of the person and the press, and the security of the home, and to that end surrounded them with a long array of sacramental forms, exactly as our constitutions do. It prescribed minutely when, how, for what causes, and by whom arrests might be made, and search-warrants issued. In other words, this Girondin draft, as was natural, gave expression to middle-class, plutocrat ideas, — protected those who sufficed themselves; but, if the burden was too heavy for the weak, so much the worse for the weak. Its motto was simply, "No despotism."

The Jacobin Constitution, on the other hand, was a *charter of fraternity*. It did not look on society as a mass of individuals, but as an organic *whole*. It, however, did not overlook the rights of individuals, for we read, —

"This constitution guarantees to all Frenchmen equality, liberty, security, property, the free exercise of religion, a common education, public assistance, unfettered freedom of the press and of public gatherings."

But that is also all; and this, it will be seen, is very vague, very indefinite. The fact is, they were pre-occupied with the *duties* of society, — pre-occupied with the weak that were to be protected, the poor that were to be fed, the unfortunate that were to be saved, not merely from oppression, but from *abandonment*. Therefore, when the Girondin draft defined liberty as "consisting in doing all things not contrary to the rights of others," they added, "It must have for rule *justice*."

Condorcet's draft simply stated that public assistance should be at the charge of the State. That did not satisfy the Jacobins. They laid it down distinctly, so that he who runs may read: "Society owes subsistence to unfortunate citizens, either by procuring them work, or, in case they are unable to work, by furnishing them means of existence."

Condorcet's draft was absolutely silent on the interdependence of men. The Jacobins solemnly declared, "It is to be accounted an injury to the social organism when one of its members is injured."

Their motto, their dominant idea, then, was *social protection;* and this fact should with all men of heart, with the working classes especially, cover these *bourgeois* with a mantle of charity.

That was their great merit: that, however shallow their reasoning might be, they felt that *no man does evil untempted*, unless he have all other men to help him to it *by standing aloof from him*, and leaving him in abject penury, physical or moral.

Their great merit: that they instinctively felt that our human failures generally — yea, even our thieves and murderers to a great extent — should be ascribed to the *organized inclemency of man to man;* to society being a *niggard steward* of nature's bounties and the accumulated labors of past generations.

Intimately connected with this difference in spirit is the circumstance that the Jacobin Constitution commenced with these words: "In the presence of, and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the French people declare," while the Girondin draft had no corresponding phrase anywhere.

The Jacobins were not orthodox believers, any more than the Girondins. They, just as little as these latter, believed in a lawless ruler outside humanity, rather leaning to the side of the rich and powerful; but, as has been said, they believed in *humanity*, while the Girondins could see only a *crowd of independent beings*. While, therefore, the latter, like Bonaparte later on, had "no need of the hypothesis" of a Supreme Spirit, the Jacobins precisely had such a need.

They did very much need a mystic bond to bind society together, and also the highest possible moral sanction for the stern duties on which they insisted.

Then there was another noticeable difference between the two documents, that on first view may puzzle the readers: this, that Condorcet's draft seemed the most democratic instrument.

His draft divided France into a great number of small primary assemblies, in which the people were to elect not only the members of the national Legislature, but also all executive officers of departments and the State, about in the same way as the people of one of our States elect their governor. The Girondins seemed already, then, to have learned that universal suffrage, when used for the selection of *men*, is perfectly compatible with the narrowest of class interests; that is to say, they had already learned the power of wealth, of glib talkers, of intriguers, over a poor, ignorant, ingenuous body of voters.

The Jacobins had learned that too. They were not less democratic than their brother *bourgeois*, but they were honest democrats, and they had a, for their time, really remarkable insight into the essence of democracy. They knew very well that a nation's business at no time — and, above all, the business of France at that time — can be carried on by votes of town-meetings; "by the counting of heads," as Carlyle has it. They knew — they showed that by their acts — that an administration *freely consented to by all, by the competent, skilful, and wise, for the benefit of the whole society*, is a truly democratic administration. They knew also that competent and wise administrators cannot possibly be selected by the whole people in primary assemblies; that only persons in a position to know certain personalities are able to tell whether they are competent and wise, or otherwise. And it is very much to be wished that those who are to inaugurate the New Social Order will know that too.

The Jacobins, therefore, amended the Girondin draft in this way: that while they let the people, in their primary assemblies, elect their members of the Legislature, as for executive officers they provided that the primary assemblies should select departmental electoral assemblies, and these should have the function of electing administrators of the departments, and nominating a number of men from whom the national Legislature was to appoint the executive officers of the State.

The Jacobins did not at all, as it seemed, and as they have been charged with, mistrust universal suffrage, — a mistrust which, however, the second Bonaparte's *plebiscites* would amply justify; but, as a matter of fact, they did not, nor did they want to, govern from above. They simply said that the people at large are wholly unfit for the function of selecting agents to do the nation's business, a function they will be eternally unfit for. But, further: they discovered the function for which the people *are* fit; to wit, that of passing upon *laws* after they are made, and saying whether they want them or not. That is to say, they inaugurated the *referendum*, at first to a very limited extent certainly. They divided the expression of the national will into two classes, *decrees* and *laws;* the former were the enactments that were urgent, and therefore operative without the people's assent; the "laws" became valid after forty days, unless a certain number of primary assemblies had meanwhile protested.

What the Jacobins were after, and undoubtedly would have secured, was a government *by the competent for the masses;* what the Girondins were after, and did afterwards secure, was a government *by the middle classes for the middle classes.*

Among the clauses where the Jacobin Constitution agreed with the Girondin draft were those on property and unrestricted private enterprise. The charge against the Jacobins which is found in so many histories, and particularly in the latest of them, by Von Sybel, that they wanted to abolish property rights in any shape, is the grossest falsehood. In that respect they were precisely typical middle-class men, most conservative even.

Only one Jacobin has written *Memoirs :* it is the physician Baudot, a member of the Convention. Certainly the fact that such a man sat on the top of the Mountain[1] during the whole term of the Convention, without hearing a word from Danton, from Robespierre, or anybody else, destructive of property, or about interference with property in any way, is strong proof that such ideas did not exist in their heads at all. These are his words: "The Convention regarded property as the fundamental basis for social order. I never heard any member of that assembly make any proposition against the principle. Not a word, not a phrase, can be quoted." And he was in the secret of the Jacobins.

On all economic subjects, it may be said, they believe like their brother *bourgeois*. Just as they, with the Girondins, believed that property is the necessary foundation of society, so they believed with them that the wage system, competition, and "private enterprise," lately freed from all shackles, would prove unmixed blessings to all classes, work-people as well as employers; and the greater the blessings, the more unfettered they were; that there was, indeed, no other system under which industry could be so well carried on. And so we find that the articles that treat of property in the Constitution of '93 are just like those of the *Code* in force in France to-day. Nay, more. When Robespierre (who on this subject really seemed to have a prophetic insight into the future) proposed two amendments that in our days should be acknowledged excellent ones, — to wit, to define "property" as that part of the fruits of a citizen's labors *which the law guarantees to him*, and forbidding any industry found to be immoral and *harmful to the well-being of others* (like our "corners"), — the whole Convention ranged itself round the draft of Cordorcet against him.

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[1] So called because their seats were raised one above another, amphitheatrically.

And as to "private enterprise," they were so jealous of it that they violently opposed themselves to the establishment of associations both of work-people and employers (to which opposition it is due that trades-unions were not legalized in France till 1884). This, again, was *not* caused by ill-will on their part to workingmen, for they say in their constitution, *naïvely*, "Only the bond of help and gratitude *will* exist between employed and employer."

* * *

As Danton was a lawyer by profession, it was not so very remarkable that he had distinguished himself in the spheres in which we hitherto have seen him active. It is more remarkable that we are now going to find him taking an equal interest, and equally active, in matters that might be supposed entirely foreign to his mind. Thus we shall find that it is he, again, who makes the decisive motions on economic and educational subjects. But, to speak the truth, this is the case with all these wonderful conventionals: they seem equally at home, and masters, whether in the tribune or at the head of the armies, whether in the current philosophy or in commerce.

Danton never pretended to be a politico-economist. In that field he entirely relied on and supported the judgment of his friend Cambon, the celebrated revolutionary finance minister. But, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, Danton had, down in the Low Countries, thought very deeply on economic subjects, and had especially matured a scheme, sketched in a memorandum in his own handwriting, — a very rare relic, now found in the French national archives, — as follows: "The Convention decrees, that, in every section of the republic where the price of corn is not in a just proportion to wages paid, the treasury shall levy a contribution on the rich, out of which shall be defrayed the difference between such price of corn and the wages of the needy." This proposal he causes to be made into a law on the 2d of April.

We have seen the whole Convention partisans of free competition and private enterprise, — Jacobins just as much as Girondins. But circumstances compelled them to violate their cherished convictions, and adopt measures considerably restricting competition. The boldest of these extraordinary measures was the *maximum*; that is to say, the *highest price* for wares.

The Constituent Assembly had, as we saw, rehabilitated the finances by issuing *assignats* based on the confiscated estates. This basis amounted to fifteen milliards of francs, or three thousand million dollars. The *assignats* certainly would have remained at *par* if the counter-Revolution, crushed at home and overwhelmed on the frontiers, had not resorted to the most shameful and monstrous forgery of them, reduced to a perfect system, and carried on in London, Holland, and Switzerland. To this crime the Convention opposed — death! But that did not prevent the paper money from sinking in value; and that consequently made all necessaries of life, and especially corn and bread, rise in price.

To bring relief to the poor, and also to raise the paper again to *par*, the first law of *maximum* was passed May 3, 1793. It ran as follows: —

"Every merchant and proprietor of corn and flour shall make to the municipality of his domicile a declaration as to the quantity and nature of what he has in his possession.

"Corn and flour must be sold only in the public markets. Nevertheless, it shall be lawful for private individuals to buy provisions from the farmers, merchants, or proprietors of their canton, if they procure a certificate from the municipality to the effect that they do not deal in these articles, and that their purchases are necessary for their own consumption for a month.

"The average price at which each kind of corn shall have been sold between Jan. 1 and May 1, 1793, shall be the *maximum*, above which corn must not be sold.

"Thus fixed, the *maximum* shall be reduced in the following proportions: On the 1st of June by one-tenth, on the 1st of July by two-tenths, on the 1st of August by three-tenths, and on the 1st of September by four-tenths.

"Anybody who buys or sells above the *maximum* shall be fined from three hundred to a thousand francs, and his corn or flour confiscated.

"Those who, with design, destroy or remove corn or flour shall be punished with *death*."

Now, this law did provide for the necessities of the moment, and did prevent very grave perils; at the same time, it necessarily gave occasion to many obnoxious and vexatious inspections. Therefore, also, the Girondin members of the Convention had opposed it all they dared. But the necessity was imminent, and their economic formula of Free Competition had to give way.

Remember that France at that time was engaged in a titanic struggle, forcing back all her enemies north, south, east, and west, and compelling almost the world to recoil in astonishment at her approach. It is not by ordinary means that such prodigies are accomplished.

To feed fourteen armies on the frontiers while a fratricidal struggle is raging within, and when all the sources of wealth are dried up, is a problem which it is doubtful that

Free Competition could have solved, but which the *assignats*, sustained by the *maximum*, did solve.

Undoubtedly the establishment of the *maximum* was in flagrant opposition to individualism and the doctrine of *laissez-faire;* and this fact remained the grand obstacle, since the middle classes were *de facto* in social power since the destruction of feudalism. Private interests opposed themselves all they could to the exigencies of social welfare, and the counter-Revolution encouraged this resistance all it could and dared. The farmers would not bring their corn to market, and force had to be used. Moreover, certain local executive officers, speculating privately, neglected to fix the *maximum*.

And then, there was in the law, as it stood, one great fault, overlooked by the Convention, to whom the whole thing was an experiment, which fault soon became apparent in practice, and made itself felt. Corn showed a most natural tendency to go from the departments where it was cheap to other departments where it was dear.

It is now and here that Danton, carrying his wonted boldness into the economic field, cuts the Gordian knot. On the 4th of September, 1793, he makes the following motion, which is immediately adopted: —

"From to-day's date the quintal [two hundred pounds] of wheat shall, until Oct. 1, 1794, *over the whole extent of the republic*, not exceed fourteen *livres* [about $2.80]."

The memorandum above mentioned showed that Danton was prepared, if occasion required it, to cut Gordian knots, in economics as elsewhere. The occasion had come: he did it. And it proved successful. Corn was, if not plenty, at all events to be had in sufficient quantity, at that price, up to the fall of Robespierre.

But it will be easily perceived that these bold innovators would soon be brought to ask themselves, "If we fix a *maximum* for wheat, why not fix it for other articles of prime necessity?" For them, again, it was only a step from regulating the sale of commodities to dealing with the rate of wages.

Hence another law, decreed Sept. 29, 1793: —

"The objects of first necessity, on which the Convention hereby fixes a *maximum*, are, fresh and salt meat, pork, butter, sweet-oil, cattle, salt-fish, wine, whiskey, vinegar, cider, beer, firewood, charcoal, coal, candles, salt, soap, potash, sugar, honey, white paper, leather, iron, lead, steel, copper, linen and woollen stuffs, cloths, raw materials for factories, wooden and leather shoes, and tobacco.

"The *maximum* for firewood and charcoal shall be their price in 1790, and one-twentieth added.

"The *maximum* for tobacco shall be twenty cents a pound; for salt, two cents a pound; for soap, twenty-one cents a pound.

"The *maximum* for all other above-mentioned articles shall be, over the whole extent of the republic, until next month of September, the prices of each in 1790, as shown by the price-currents, and *one-third* added; deduction being made of all duties then levied.

"The *maximum* for all wages and prices paid for piece-work shall be, until next September, what they were in 1790, with *one-half* added, to be determined by the various general councils of communes."

The law was guarded by severe penalties: "All persons buying or selling above the *maximum* shall be punished by a fine, double the value of the object sold, and *inscribed among the suspected*."

That law was certainly a stronger slap in the face of the doctrine of *laissez-faire* and the principle of demand and supply. It was a kind of democratic protest against considering a state of society which allows demand and supply to rule, unharnessed so to say, as "the best of all possible words" — except for the plutocrats.

But now the smaller middle class — the smaller middlemen — rebelled. As soon as the law was proclaimed, dealers were seen closing their shops, declaring they had no more sugar, oil, candles; manufacturers threatened to close their factories. Those who had ready money took advantage of this state of things, and soon emptied all the shops. The police had to interfere, and forbid traders to deliver more of one merchandise to one than to another.

It was then seen that the *maximum* had to embrace *all* the agents in production; as the law stood, it very much wronged the retailer. The *maximum* ought to commence at the *source*.

The law was therefore amended as follows: —

"The price of every kind of merchandise comprised in the law of *maximum* shall be what it was in 1790, *at the place of its production*, *plus one-third* of said price, *plus five per cent* for the wholesaler, *plus five per cent* for the retailer, and, furthermore, a fixed price per mile for transport added."

Another decree ordered the Committee on Subsistence to make out a so-called *Tableau of Maximum*, which should make known the cost of raw materials and the values which labor added to the products.

A truly gigantic work, and of an imposing novelty! All the mysteries of production were explored; daylight was let into all factories; industry was interrogated by commissioners as indefatigable as learned, and from their labors issued an immense statistical work, — the said *Tableau*.

This law did its work well. We cannot sufficiently insist on this: that the *assignats* rose to *par* again, and remained pretty nearly there until the fall of Robespierre; that these *assignats* sustained fourteen armies, and were the instruments that saved France; and, further, that *it was this maximum that sustained the assignats and gave them life.*

"However, the normal working of the *maximum* undoubtedly presupposes a social organization founded on intimate harmony between all interests [a Co-operative Commonwealth, so to speak]. Had the Revolution been allowed to pursue the path farther, those who established the *maximum* would have been led, step by step, to a *social* revolution, the depth of which they could not possibly at the time have foreseen," thinks Louis Blanc.

I, on the contrary, should say that it would have obviated all the difficulties of the transition period which we now experience, and smoothed the passage over into the New Social Order.

Note, first, what this *Tableau* really was. Just as the French, as we saw, first inaugurated our Universal Expositions, so this *Tableau* was the first precedent for the splendid statistical tables which are periodically issued by the *unique* Bureaus of Statistics of Labor of the United States, to which no other country as yet has any thing corresponding.

We have seen that the wage-system, and competition, and "private enterprise," were necessary in order to accomplish the great *desideratum*, — increase of productive power. That has been splendidly accomplished. The wage-system and competition have thus justified themselves, and have proved themselves historic necessities.

Note, also, that the Jacobins were perfectly in accord with their brother *bourgeois* as to the necessity and desirability of this wage-system and competition.

But there are some decidedly evil effects following at the heel of the good ones. Competition now causes every one to produce for himself, sell for himself, *in secret*, without knowing what his rivals produce and sell. And yet his very success depends on his knowing this.

These are just the evils that this *Tableau*, for which they thus had by circumstances been forced to provide, would have obviated. It would have brought order into what has become anarchy. It would have prevented the secrecy. It would, just what now our Bureaus of Statistics of Labor are commencing to do, have enlightened our "movers in production" as to their own interests, have told them how best to use their resources, and have brought about *organization of industry*, so much desired; it would not, as Louis Blanc thinks, have led to the "Co-operative Commonwealth," but simply have made this transition period more tolerable to all concerned, and prevented the wage-system and competition from doing more harm than good, as they are at the present day. France could, by leading in industry, have continued to lead the world. It is curious to think that at that very moment Saint-Simon, the social philosopher, was engaged in land speculations, to gain means to think out and publish an Organization of Industry — with the plutocrats for chiefs.

* * *

The Jacobin Convention made, as has been intimated, several tentatives to realize *fraternity*, in striking contrast to their plutocratic brethren. As such tentative may, perhaps, be considered the motion made by Danton in the spring of 1793 for the abolition of imprisonment for debt, which was carried. On that occasion the royalist Peltier sneered: "He [Danton] liberated those detained for debts; then *he made debts* (!), then he was a profligate (!!)" Good logic, is it not? And this is really the way most of the charges against him are supported.

But more important is what they did for their *paupers*.

The English plutocrats have at least felt that society owes subsistence to the indigent, hence their poor-laws; but it should also be noted, that as soon as they had grasped supreme power, by the Reform Act of 1832, they showed their contempt for the poor by imposing on them most degrading conditions for being admitted to relief. But the French *bourgeoisie* have done nothing, absolutely nothing. True, in France they have what they call "public assistance." But do not suppose that means relief by the State. No, it means that certain of the most populous communes are empowered to levy rates for the support of the poor; however, the amount in all France is not more than a two hundred and fiftieth part of what the British expend; and in Paris the average relief to each person *yearly* is the pittance of nineteen francs, or three dollars and eighty cents.

The Jacobin Convention did what follows: —

On June 23, 1793, they passed, as we saw, their constitution, which, among other things, provided, —

"Art. 21. Public assistance is a sacred debt. Society owes subsistence to its unfortunate citizens, either by procuring them labor or by insuring subsistence to those who are unable to labor."

They did not wait long with the practical application. Five days afterwards a law was passed organizing the assistance that should be given annually to children, old persons, widows, and paupers.

The following are some extracts of this, the most humane Act, dating from the French Revolution, of June 28, 1793.

"Article I. Parents who have no resources but their labor, are entitled to assistance from the State whenever their wages do not suffice for existence.

"Art. III. Those living by their labor, who already have two children, can claim support from the State for the third child that may be born.

"Art. IV. Those who already have three infant children, who likewise live exclusively by their labor, and who do not pay rates exceeding five days' labor, can claim a like support for the fourth child.

"ART. V. Likewise those not living by the product of their labor, who pay a rate above the value of five days' labor, but not exceeding ten days' labor, and already have four children, can claim support for the fifth child that may be born.

"ART. VI. The support shall commence for all as soon as their wives have reached the sixth month of pregnancy.

"ART. VII. The parents who already are in receipt of support from the nation, shall be entitled to receive the same support for each child that may be born after the third, the fourth, and the fifth.

"ART. XI. Children who are supported on the labor of their father exclusively, shall all be maintained by the nation, if the father dies or becomes incapacitated, until they can earn their own living.

"ART. XII. In case of the death of the husband, the widow, the head of a family, who cannot by her labor support it, shall equally have the right to maintenance from the nation."

The subsequent articles lay down, that the support may amount, every year, to eighty francs (sixteen dollars) for each child, and a hundred and twenty francs (twenty-four dollars), in addition, for the mother, and this pension shall commence with the birth, and continue to the age of twelve years; that children twelve years of age who show themselves fit for a trade, shall be apprenticed at the cost of the nation, so that the expenses do not exceed a hundred francs (twenty dollars) annually; and that the others who may prefer to devote themselves to agriculture, shall receive a donation of two hundred francs (forty dollars). Moreover, the mother was to receive eighteen francs (three dollars and sixty cents) to defray the expenses of her confinement, and twelve francs (two dollars and forty cents) in addition for baby-linen.

The same support was to be given to unmarried women becoming mothers, who, moreover, were entitled, at any period of their pregnancy, to enter special lying-in hospitals, maintained by the nation.

Indigent old persons should be supported at their homes or in special houses of refuge, as they might choose, from the time of being incapacitated by old age from earning their living, and in proportion to their incapacity. The maximum of their annual pension was fixed at a hundred and twenty francs (twenty-four dollars).

Committees, selected by the citizens for two years, and renewed by halves each year, were to carry out these provisions.

The same law provided for the organization of a medical service and dispensaries of medicines, so that all needy persons were entitled, over and above their pensions, to medical care and medicines.

Curiously enough, this Act has never been repealed, and is thus, even now, the law of France, but, of course, a dead letter ever since the fall of the Jacobins. Practical proposals, indeed, have been made in our days for the raising of sufficient means to carry out the law, by M. Godin of Guise, but, of course, ignored.

Again, here is a splendid idea Danton had for the benefit of maimed soldiers : —

"Without doubt, the moment is not far away when not a single poor person will be found in the whole territory of the republic. But as it is by enjoyment that man is attached to his country, I believe it would be well to make, without delay, an attempt to carry out your great ideas. Representatives, there are already many citizens among us who have been mutilated in our defence ; would it not be well to grant land to them in the suburbs of Paris, and give them beasts, and thus start, under the very eyes of the Convention, a colony of patriots who have suffered for the fatherland?

Then every soldier of the republic will say to himself, 'If I am mutilated, if I lose a limb in defending the rights of my people, I know what I can expect. There are already several of my brethren who are rewarded for the service they have rendered; I shall add to their number, and bless unceasingly the founders of the republic.' I demand that the Committee *of Public Welfare* work out this idea, so that we may soon have the satisfaction of seeing those of our brethren who have earned well of the country in defending her, eat together under our eyes, at the common patriotic table."

Danton delighted in nothing so much as in feasting with his family in public with his fellow-citizens. This was the period when long tables were placed in the streets, where the patriots took their prepared food and ate it in common. Curious folks, these Frenchmen! This proposition was referred to the committee, and bore some good fruit, at any rate, as we shall see.

Lastly, I just mention, in this connection, a measure to which I shall return in another place, which, on its face, is for the relief of the poor; I mean the celebrated *Law of Forty Sous*, proposed by Danton Sept. 6, 1793, and adopted as soon as proposed. It reads as follows: "Be it decreed, that the sections of Paris shall for the future assemble in regular sessions, every Sunday and Thursday, and that every citizen attending the same shall, on demand, be paid forty sous (forty cents) for each and every session."

* * *

Now the Jacobin Convention comes, and strikes a powerful blow at that wet-nurse of the plutocratic classes, *Speculation*.

On the 27th of June, 1793, a decree orders the closing of the Exchange. Let me here add, as a companion picture, and as a curious sign of the rigorous manners of these heroic times, so different from the present, that shortly afterwards the Committee *of Public Welfare* is charged with removing all notoriously lewd women out of France, because "the republic needs vigorous bodies and Spartan souls."

Again, on Aug. 24, Cambon says from the Tribune, "There is at this moment a struggle for life or death between money-changers and the republic. It is necessary to destroy these destroyers of public credit if we wish to establish the reign of liberty," and the Convention decrees, "All associations whose capital stock is based on shares to bearers, on negotiable instruments or titles, transferable at will, are hereby suppressed."

As long as the closing of the Exchange lasted, speculations were, as a matter of course, still carried on clandestinely; to wit, at the Palais Royal. But the speculators had to be very careful, for sometimes it happened that the Revolutionary Tribunal put its iron hand on them.

The Jacobins also tried to change the course of the sales of the national estates. We saw how the plutocrats threw themselves, like vultures, on them, and how the national assemblies, the Convention included, as long as the Girondins predominated in it, had loyally farthered their nefarious practices. After May 31 things change.

On the 10th of June the Jacobin Convention decrees that the communal lands are to be distributed. All inhabitants of the communes, farmers, agricultural laborers, servants, etc., are to have an equal share; the lands to be divided as much as possible into equal parts, and distributed by drawing lots in alphabetical order. And in communes that have no commons, the heads of families shall be entitled to buy five hundred francs worth of emigrants' estates, the purchase-money payable in the course of twenty years.

Yet the good intentions of the Convention were frustrated by the civil war and the war against the coalition. The Revolutionary Government, soon after established, had other things to attend to than distributing lands, or, for that matter, collecting dues, so we may be sure the jobbers who owed the republic for their enormous purchases in previous years paid less than ever. But, as an offset, confiscation after confiscation swelled the bulk of the national estates to an enormous mass. Before the end of the year nearly half of the soil of France belonged to the State, and in Paris alone the State owned two-thirds of all houses.

The plea by Danton in favor of maimed soldiers, reported a few pages back, bore some good fruit, as stated: it resulted in another good decree to the effect that *a milliard* (two hundred million dollars) *worth of the national estates should be reserved for and distributed amongst the volunteers*, fighting on the frontiers for the life of the republic. We shall see how, afterwards, the plutocrats succeeded in nullifying both the above popular decrees.

But these plutocrats did not get away from the Jacobins without bleeding a little. At the same time that Danton roused the people to the final efforts, in August, 1793, Cambon caused to be decreed a forced loan from them to the amount of a milliard (two hundred million dollars) and made them pay it.

Cambon's greatest feat, however, one that has withstood all changes, was to merge all national and royal debts (which still attached many to the royal cause) into one great revolutionary debt, inscribed on *le Grand Livre* (the Great Ledger) of France, thereby very much simplifying, and especially greatly strengthening, the credit of the republic. All creditors were summoned to bring their titles within a given time to the treasury, there to be destroyed, and the claims instead inscribed in the Ledger, or forever after debarred from recovery. This was a very shrewd measure, considering that a public debt was to remain an institution.

* * *

Children pre-occupy the Jacobin Convention even more than men; its patience as to educational matters is infinite.

A *unique* spectacle, thus to see childhood protected by rude hands that soon after lean on the scaffold !

A most remarkable fact this is, that there is no improvement discussed to-day, whether in regard to organization or methods of education, no subject-matter of education in a democratic State, which was not conceived and discussed in the Jacobin Convention.

Among the papers of the rich patriot Lepelletier, assassinated in the month of January, was found a scheme for national education, which, read by Robespierre before the Convention July 13, excited in a high degree the enthusiasm of all. The scheme, which contained noble sentiments, and a touching sympathy, especially in a rich man, for children of the poor, consisted in giving a common education to all the children of the republic. Lepelletier demanded that all boys from their sixth to twelfth year, and all girls from their fifth to eleventh year, should be *educated in common*, at the cost of the republic, and have during that period, by virtue of the holy "law of equality," *the same clothes, food, instruction, and care.*

This plan was, in principle, adopted by the Convention Aug. 13, 1793, but fortunately accompanied by the following modification, moved by Danton : —

"There shall be created national establishments in which the children of citizens shall be fed, instructed, and lodged gratuitously, and also classes where the citizens who may wish to keep their children at home can send them for instruction simply."

The speech which introduced this motion was, in effect, as follows : —

"Citizens, — Next after giving France liberty, and conquering her enemies, nothing will be more glorious than to secure to coming generations an education worthy of our liberty ; this was the great aim Lepelletier had placed before himself.

He started from the principle that whatever is good for society, is and should be a concern of each. Our colleague, assassinated by tyranny, deserves well of humanity! But what is the task the *legislator* has to perform? It is, to bring principles and expediency into harmony. Thus, the objection has been made to the plan, that parental love opposes itself to its execution; and no doubt we must reckon with human nature, even when on a wrong tack. At the same time, if we come to the conclusion that we ought not to make education compulsory, we must be very careful not to deprive the children of the poor of education.

"The greatest difficulty in our way is undoubtedly the financial one. But, as I have expressed myself on other occasions, we do not really *spend* money when we make profitable investments of it for the public benefit. Here I add this: that it is eminently proper that the children of the people should be educated out of the superfluities of men with scandalous fortunes. *When you sow the vast field of the republic, do not, I implore you, count the cost of the seed! Next after bread, education is the first necessary of life for the people.* [Applause.] I therefore submit this question to you: Shall there, or shall there not, be founded, at the expense of the nation, establishments to which every citizen can, if he chooses, send his children for public, national education?

"The instruction, of course, must be *common.* Education at home narrows the mind: a common education broadens it. I know that paternal affection has been made into an objection to it. Well, I myself am a father; when I consider the relation which this circumstance places me in, in regard to the Commonwealth, I assure you I feel proud! My son, I declare, does not belong to me, but to the republic; it is the duty of the latter to teach him his duties, that he may perform them well.

"It has also been said that our peasants object to being deprived of the help of their children. Well, then let us not compel them; let us simply offer them the opportunity. Let us establish classes where they, perhaps, may be induced to send their children, at all events on Sundays. Institutions will form new manners."

In order to bring together all the ideas of Danton on this matter, I quote the following from another speech, delivered some months afterwards, *in favor of compulsory education*:—

"It is time to establish a great principle which seems to have been neglected; this, to wit: that *children belong to the republic rather than to the parents.* No one respects nature more than I do. But social interests demand the full allegiance of the affections. Who is there who can guarantee that children trained up in the egoism of the family will not be dangerous to the republic? We have humored private affections sufficiently when we tell the parents, 'We will not tear your children away from you, but neither shall you be permitted to withdraw them from social influences.' It is in the national schools that our children will imbibe national, public milk."

The above motion of Danton's creates a splendid system of national education, and for a couple of years truly great results are obtained. There was manifested an unquenchable thirst after knowledge.

The Revolution made the French a homogeneous nation, also, in language; and that, too, was the work of the Jacobins. When they came to power, *nearly half of the twenty-five million Frenchmen did not speak or understand the French language*, but spoke innumerable dialects. The Jacobin Convention put a teacher of French *into every commune* of *every frontier department*, and every Frenchman *did* learn French.

And now is seen a truly astonishing spectacle. On the very day when it is resolved that the Revolutionary Tribunal shall divide itself into four sections, each with its guillotine, to cut heads off the quicker, on the 15th of September, 1793, in the midst of this terrible excitement, which one should think would leave room for nothing but violent emotions, a deputation from the constituted authorities of Paris and her suburbs appears at the bar of the Convention, and strongly urges the immediate organization of *superior instruction !*

And immediately the Convention enthusiastically decrees, —

"Independent of the primary schools, there shall be established in the republic three progressive degrees of instruction : first, for giving the (technical) knowledge indispensable to artisans and working-men ; secondly, the (technical) knowledge necessary to professions ; and thirdly, furnishing all needed opportunities for pursuing such difficult studies as only the more gifted minds are fit for."

And this same Jacobin Convention further had the great merit, during the period with which we are dealing, of initiating, and afterwards of founding, the following grand institutions, that survive to this day : —

The Normal School ;

The Conservatory of Arts ;

The Museum of Natural History ; and last, but by no means least,

The *Polytechnic School*, of all the above institutions the most eminent.

The error of the Jacobins was, that they thought that education had the power to transform, at one stroke, the manners, opinions, usages, and sentiments of France, and to regenerate society altogether. The peasants had profited by the abolition of the tithes, of taxes, and feudal burdens which the Revolution had secured for them : nevertheless, it proved an easy thing for the enemies of the Revolution to inspire them with a great distrust for the schools of the republic; and, as a consequence, while many of the ideas of the Jacobins have at length, in our days, become victorious, many others are still in abeyance.

The "enemies of the Revolution" were, in this case, of course, the clergy; in particular, the orthodox Catholic clergy, — the "non-swearers," so called. Their hatred for the Conventionals was equal to that the latter felt for the former. In order to comprehend this hatred it is requisite to bear one thing in mind: religion in France did *not* mean Christianity; it meant the Catholic *Church;* and this, again, meant nothing else than *obedience,* — obedience to the Pope. The faithful wanted genuine sacraments; to get them they had to obey the priest; he had to obey his bishop, and he again the Pope. The Conventionals were thus placed in the unfortunate predicament, that, by attacking this obedience to the Pope, a patriotic object, they necessarily attacked religion. But in this open struggle of theirs against the Pope they could not help failing, as Edgar Quinet well observes. A form of religion, and the authority of the Catholic Church in particular, *can* be overcome by force, but only when there is *another religion* to take its place. That history has taught us in the Reformation of England, Germany, and Scandinavia. Unfortunately the French had no other religion to substitute. They were, therefore, bound to fail. And they did fail. The Legislative Body had ordered the clergy to take an oath by which they virtually would break the bond that united them to the Pope, but three-fourths of their number refused, — hence their name of "non-swearers."

Under these circumstances there was only one thing to do, in order to create that free field for science and philosophy that was required: it was the policy Danton strenuously advocated, — not to have *any thing at all* to do with the clergy, the Church, and the Pope, *separation of Church and State*, as practised here in our country. This policy, indeed, was pursued a couple of years afterwards, until Bonaparte unfortunately reversed it.

But meanwhile a most miserable and odious step is entered upon, due to Hébert. It consists in closing the churches by force, and cajoling as many of the clergy as can be influenced to surrender their priestly credentials, and resign their places. A wave of insane fanaticism passes over France, and the great scandal is witnessed of the Archbishop of Paris, and then a number of the clergy from all over the country, appearing before the Convention to declare that they had till then been contemptible hypocrites, and been teaching the people falsehoods. Fortunately Danton also here stems these outrages. He causes an end to be put to further reception of clergy; and, since Hébert had proposed to withdraw their pensions from the clergymen who do not declare themselves impostors, Danton roundly denounces it as unjust, and succeeds in defeating the proposal.

* * *

On the 9th of August, 1793, Cambacérès deposited his *Civil Code* on the table of the president of the Convention. That body had given its Committee on Legislation three months to draft it; the work was done in one month. The jurists, too, would show themselves heroes.

Yet that is the moment when all Frenchmen are exhorted to join the armies. Every one is aware that the enemy has passed the frontiers. The nation seems to have but a moment to live. Suddenly it becomes calm. The place that a few minutes ago resounded with cries, curses, prayers, and weeping, is so quiet you can hear a pin drop. The representatives of a nation that seems to have but a day to live occupy themselves in voting laws that now govern thirty-five millions of men, — tables of law truly descended among thunder and lightning!

And who is the president? Hérault de Séchelles, Danton's intimate friend. Cambacérès proposes, the Convention votes, Hérault Séchelles proclaims, the principles which now govern the social relations, the lives, the deaths, the property, of Frenchmen of to-day. How, then, comes it that the Convention is now remembered only as a destructive body? Because another has shamelessly plundered it of its works.

That which constitutes a civil code, in French jurisprudence especially, are its fundamental principles. If, now, we compare the Civil Code of 1793 and that of 1803, we find these fundamental principles have been taken literally over from one to the other. But a nation has to be effaced in order to glorify a man.

The labor of the Convention on its code goes on bravely, quietly, obstinately. When the factions are tired out in strife, when there is a moment's silence, the code re-appears, and unites all intelligences; and in this way the Convention gives sixty sittings to it. It was the work complementary to that of Aug. 4, — upbuilding and destruction, both done without friction. I note the following incidents of the discussions: —

Once the question is, whether a functionary elected by the people to an office shall give security. Danton rises, and says, —

"I object to security: it is absurd in theory. The responsibility that is wanted is moral, not pecuniary. When the time comes, as we all hope it soon will, that the people select for public functions only the talented and the virtuous, there will be no need for financial security." So decreed.

At another time the question is as to the right of married people over their property. Danton asks in what way the Committee on Legislation has solved the problem.

Cambacérès. "We have declared that the husband shall not be able to dispose of the common property without the consent of his wife."

Danton. "Good! Nothing is more reasonable."

One of the most solemn moments was when slavery was declared abolished in the French colonies. Observe! this Jacobin Convention is the first sovereign authority that abolishes modern negro slavery. A deputation of colored men from the colonies is admitted to the Convention, and saluted by the president with a kiss on the cheek. Danton seems to have had an almost prophetic insight into the future, for he says, among other things, on that occasion, —

"By sowing liberty in the New World, we shall cause it to bear abundant fruit, and shoot profound roots there."

* * *

And why should such a convention, one moment engaged in decreeing a victory, another founding museums and schools, not create entirely new *weights and measures* of capacity and distances? They do it: they establish the metrical system, which at last, in our days, after a hard struggle has been victorious. From weights and measures they deemed it but a step to a *new calendar;* Frenchmen of the last century had such a need, such a desire, of forgetting their past, of forgetting every thing that could remind them of former times, forgetting even the old names of days, months, and seasons. Fabre d'Églantine, an author, and also friend of Danton, lays it before the Convention in the fall of 1793.

Did not Nature itself sanction the French Revolution, when the republic was proclaimed on the 22d of September, 1792, the very day of the autumnal equinox? The great French Republic is, therefore, a part of the firmament of heaven, and ought to reckon its era from that date, as the first day of year I. Said era lasted twelve years. It was really the most foolish of all their conceptions,—a remarkable instance of their unbounded conceit, to believe that all other nations would cheerfully adopt a new calendar whereby to regulate their most private relations, and in the framing of which they yet had had no share.

They even could not, in spite of all they might do, make their own peasants accept the new calendar. It is well known with what tenacity the common people cling to habits that have become ingrown with all their daily tasks. When even the decimal system of weights and measures, in spite of its evident superiority, has only in our days, after eighty years of struggle, been accepted, how could it be expected that a span-new calendar, *which abolished Sunday*, could be acceptable? No more Sundays! this was something the peasants could never understand. Somewhat different was it with the towns. For the Sundays the calendar had substituted *decadies* — every tenth day — as a holiday. In nearly all towns the municipal officers, with their tricolor scarfs of office, went every *decadi* in procession to the churches, where in the place of the altar a tree of liberty had been planted, and held, often with a great deal of pomp, municipal "festivals," which all "good citizens" attended. National hymns were sung, orators of the locality gave vent to their eloquence, and marriages were solemnized.

This was a matter in which the Convention greatly wronged the working-people, and simply in order to gratify arithmetical fancies and hatred of the Church. To substitute every tenth day, instead of every seventh, as a day of rest, to give them but three instead of four holidays in the month, was to rob them of so much of their little leisure. It was indefensible, the more so as they really had a tender sympathy for the working-classes, in spite of their middle-class notions about property and the wage-system. But it was the only instance where the Jacobin Convention knowingly did any thing to the prejudice of the poor.

* * *

So far, then, every thing the Jacobin Convention had done or attempted in the way of social reform — except the childish freak of the new calendar — had been practical and promised to be permanent. Let us repeat the grand measures they had passed in such a short space of time: —

The *maximum.*
Industrial statistics.
A most generous poor-law.
Closing the Exchange.
Land grants to the poor and to soldiers.
A splendid scheme of primary and superior education.
The Polytechnic School.
Universalization of the French language.
The code, including the abolition of slavery.
The decimal system of weights and measures.
The Great Ledger.

It was all in harmony with the programme stated as being that of Danton in the preceding chapter, except the *maximum*, into which they had been forced by circumstances, and in that they had been eminently successful. They had so far not allowed metaphysical speculations to influence them in action; they had brought no translation at all of "God's mysterious text" into the public place, except as every day's necessities demanded it.

In other words, they had, led by Danton, practised the policy now known by the name of "opportunism," — the only practicable policy under the circumstances, since they were absolutely ignorant, and could not help being ignorant, of the society that was to be evolved. We now know that was to be a transition society. We know that the two principal things to accomplish were, to *increase production* and productivity, and *make the mental preparation*, the preparation in the minds of the people, for the final change. A third thing, otherwise resulting from the new system, was *the teaching the multitude new wants.* In order to increase production, it was necessary that the rich middle classes should have *supreme power* and be enabled *to practise free competition and private enterprise* to *the utmost* and *unfettered.* This policy of opportunism, so prudently entered upon, would have accomplished that; for we have seen that the Jacobins believed as fully in these middle-class principles as the plutocrats.

The Jacobins in that case would, if they had preserved their power, or at least some part of their influence, have become the good genius of the French *bourgeoisie.* Not alone would they have prevented, or at least bridled, the shameful excesses, the *criminal* practices, of the plutocrats: more important it is, that they would have insisted on these plutocrats performing their other, their *incidental duties of rulership.* Since the middle classes accepted, courted, *supreme power*, they should have assumed all the responsibilities, as the clergy and nobility had done in the Middle Ages. They should have looked after social interests, instead of which they have steadily sacrificed social interests to personal, private interests. The Jacobins would have secured to the poorer classes *means* to *satisfy their increased wants.* They would have "prevented gluts," and "presided over the apportionment and distribution of wages for work done." They would have softened the hatred of the *bourgeoisie* for the poorer classes, and thus prevented the hatred and the terrible feelings of revenge which these classes now, on their side, nourish for the *bourgeoisie.* They would have made our present order a smooth transition over into the permanent social order which approaches, instead of the violent revolution it now threatens to become. They would have retained France at the head of progress.

But they suffered themselves to be misled by Hébert and Robespierre, became brutal, cruel, or rather, cowardly; in consequence, the splendid foundation they had laid was destroyed. Only a little here and there remained, as the *Code*, retained under a false name to gratify a selfish individual's vanity. Undoubtedly our days have seen other of their works resurrected, as their educational system, because built on eternal verities.

They became a "faction;" they insisted on a false interpretation of "God's text,"—insisted on translating it in the light of the gospel of Jean Jacques, and on twisting France into the shape and measure of ancient Sparta, ignoring her whole previous history. But not that alone. Frenchmen, as they were, *they were impatient in applying this false conception.* It is an essential difference between Englishmen and Frenchmen, that the former are what is called fond of compromises, which really means that they are *not in a hurry in drawing ultimate conclusions;* the latter are *unhealthily* logical,—as already said, *deem nothing gained till they have realized the last conclusion of the syllogism.* It was this characteristic that caused their failure here, as it has done at other times. Their reign became but a short *episode.*

On the other hand, what a blunder to draw therefrom the conclusion that the Revolution failed! No, the Revolution accomplished the *rôle* assigned to it in history. Our reformers who draw such a false conclusion, like these other "reformers," Godin of Guise and our own Henry George, are precisely as near-sighted as the Jacobins of '93, and with less excuse; they all have a wrong interpretation, a false translation, of "God's mysterious text."

CHAPTER VI.

TERROR.

Sept. 17, 1793, to July 28, 1794.

"*Nothing is more difficult than to harmonize with the narrower fanatics of one's own faith.*"

HÉBERTISM. — PITY. — APRIL 5. — DANTON DISINTERESTED. — DANS LE NÉANT, "NOTHINGNESS" (?). — THE INCORRUPTIBLE. — "MONSIEUR!"

NOW the French Revolution suffers its great eclipse, commencing with that terrible code of the Terror, the "Law of the Suspect."

Danton had intended the stern revolutionary measures of which he was the author to be provisional, temporary; they were to enable France to crush conspirators, and win victories. That having been accomplished, the feverish excitement, it was supposed, would cool, and the severity of the government would then be more and more relaxed. First of all, the Revolutionary Tribunal would be abolished; and by and by the Committee *of Public Welfare* would give way to a regular, liberal government, under the constitution, which perhaps would be amended. Danton supposed all the time he would be able, by his adroitness, to control the course of affairs, as he had hitherto done.

But in this he was now commencing to be bitterly disappointed. Ever since his refusal to assume responsibility (though his foreign policy is steadily being pursued) he is more and more being supplanted by Robespierre in the committee, — or, rather, by Billaud-Varennes, as the power behind the throne, — and in the Commune by Hébert.

Ah, Hébert was certainly the very worst of all the revolutionary chiefs, and a wholly pernicious influence; an influence which, during the autumn months of '93, became paramount, and overshadowed even that of Robespierre. Wholly pernicious it was. Marat had been hysterically, insanely cruel, but never coarse. Hébert was equally cruel and bloodthirsty — from calculation. But there was another enormity of which he was guilty, — the very blackest of offences, in my opinion, and for which, alone, he almost deserved to be guillotined; this: that, though refined in personal tastes, and almost a dandy in appearance, he yet descended so low as to address the people in the coarsest and most vulgar language, having fallen into the gross but common error that the work-people understand and like such language best. He accordingly sprinkled his paper, the *Père Duchesne*, with the most atrocious obscenities, which were copied by all the journals of Europe, in order to show to what depths Paris had fallen. And yet Hébert finds apologists, even in our days, who fancy they clear his reputation by showing that his paper was not, from first to last, obscene, but that frequently it had very readable articles and good ideas.

Yet I firmly believe he was perfectly honest, and a patriot. I believe that all the Jacobin chiefs were unselfish men, and that this very quality nobly distinguishes them from the leading plutocrats of the period. But that very fact should be a warning to *us*. Hébert was no rascal, but terribly wrong-headed, — and wrong-hearted too, it may be added. He was in that respect, and, indeed, in all others, a good representative of our anarchists of to-day: he was a prototype of John Most.

He and his party were, as the Girondins had been, and as our anarchists are, partisans of the war for propaganda, ardent partisans. It was their religion. Again, after the fall of the Girondins, the Hébertists perpetuated their "Federalism," carried it even farther; that is to say, they wanted to do away with the supremacy of the State, and, instead of it, "municipalize" France and all Europe, — divide them into autonomous communes, — the notion, it may be remembered, of Baron Cloots, who in some respects belonged to Hébert's party. Our modern anarchists likewise propose, *in the teeth of evolution*, that society be dissolved, in order to allow the formation of small, voluntary, "autonomous" groups, and apparently do not reflect that these sovereign "groups" will virtually be small *States*, which experience should have taught us are far more dictatorial than large ones. I think it, by the way, very unfortunate that nearly all French revolutionists, of all schools, seem committed to the sovereignty of the "Commune," as opposed to that of the nation. Lastly, like the Girondins the Hébertists were atheists, and like our anarchists, *fanatic* atheists. In the approaching months of November and December they will make the hall of the Convention, and, indeed, all Paris and France, into a madhouse, by their atheistic mummeries and processions.

In all this we find many ideas common to Girondins and Hébertists. Indeed, the difference was this: that, while their principles were identical, the former wanted them carried out for the benefit of the plutocrats exclusively, and Hébert for the benefit of the proletariat, the "Have-nots;" and, if we go to the bottom, I think we shall find the same really to be the difference, and the only difference, between our anarchists and our individualists, between John Most on the one side, and Herbert Spencer and Auberon Herbert on the other.

It was the same in regard to centralization. Hébert was violently opposed to the Committee *of Public Welfare*, and opposed to it the doctrine of unrestricted liberty, which, in his mouth, really meant license: the government of "the street." It was the attempt to carry this doctrine into practice that finally doomed him. But that which, together with his journalist obscenities, constituted his worst crime, was what I called his "wrong-heartedness;" was that he, his party, and journal constantly incited to murder, bloodshed, and outrage. He was the true father of the Terror, though he had a rival to this distinction in Billaud, of the committee. In that respect many of our anarchists are, unfortunately, also too like him. It is not an uncommon thing, though it will hardly be believed, to find in French anarchist journals leading articles that openly preach the doctrine of *vengeances particulières;* that is to say, recommend their followers, at the breaking-out of the revolution, by all means to obey the worst promptings of their *private* malice and revengeful feelings. It is perfectly devilish!

It was on Sept. 17 that was voted this "Law of the Suspect," the first-fruit of the spirit of Hébert. Billaud-Varennes was in the chair of the Convention — as was fit. This law was terrible, as has been said, — terrible from its vagueness. All who by their conduct, position, words, or writings, had shown themselves "partisans of tyranny or enemies of liberty," all who had been refused certificates of "civism," all functionaries who had been suspended by the Convention or its commissioners, all former nobles, all *wives*, *husbands*, *fathers*, *mothers*, *sons*, *daughters*, *sisters*, *brothers*, or *agents* of emigrants "who had not uninterruptedly manifested attachment to the Revolution," were declared "suspects," and ordered to be arrested. Lists were immediately to be made of such persons, and their arrest to be effected at once. No one opposed the passage of this law; there was no discussion, in fact. And Danton? He pursued his usual policy, that which he had carried out in regard to the decree of Nov. 19 the previous year: he thought it inadvisable to oppose it in the heat of passion. We shall see he did oppose it when he thought the time had come.

And now Hébert and Billaud hurry their victims to the guillotine: the *ci-devant* (former) Queen; then twenty-one Girondin members of the Convention, who spent the night before their execution in songs, drinking, and ribaldry; then Philip Égalité, *ci-devant* Duke of Orleans; then Bailly, once president of the National Assembly and mayor of Paris, executed for the part he took in the killing on the Champ de Mars, July 17, 1791. Arrived at the usual place of execution, it was thought fit, on reflection, that he should meet death where he had inflicted it; therefore he and the guillotine were taken to the Champ de Mars, where with genuinely Parisian refined cruelty he had to wait in a rainstorm till the instrument of death was once more erected. Then followed Madame Roland, Madame Elizabeth; and then they came in *fournées*, as it was styled (ovensfull).

It was fit that the device of the republic were now changed: it now became "*Liberty*, *Equality*, *Fraternity*, — OR DEATH!"

All these excesses grievously wounded Danton. Once, speaking of the Hébertists, he said, stamping with his foot, as if crushing an insect, "This is what I would do to this miserable crew." Some time before the Queen's execution, the representative of Austria, who still supposed him influential, asked him to see that no harm befell her, at the same time offering him a considerable sum of money. He spurned the bribe, but promised to do what he could for her, adding that her death had never entered into his thoughts. He had once publicly recommended that she be returned to her family. As for the Girondins, their fate almost broke his heart. He told Garat, the tears flowing down his cheeks, that he had done all he could to save them, but in vain. This failure, which must have happened about the middle of October, made him even bodily ill, it is said.

Fairness requires that something additional be said about a man belonging to this "crew," Chaumette, the legal adviser and representative of Paris. He, also, was a dogmatic atheist, but with many noble qualities. He had obtained the abolition of the lash and of corporal punishment in schools; the suppression of lotteries, that bane of Parisians at all times; the closing of gambling-houses; and the daily opening of the libraries to the public. He furthermore procured for the patients, who hitherto had been horribly crowded in the hospitals, a separate bed for each, and that books be sent them; also the assignment of a separate building to lying-in women; the amendment of the atrocious treatment of criminals; and the founding of an asylum for the indigent and the aged. He helped to found the Conservatory of Music, and procured the suspension of the Vandal restoration of pictures in the Louvre. Lastly he demanded equality of burial, and wished — such a beautiful idea to a Frenchman — that the winding sheet of every citizen in his coffin should be a national flag. He was far from being a dangerous man. Among anarchists of to-day similar noble men are found, such as Krapotkin. Unfortunately, and most unjustly, he became a victim of Camille's pen, and had to share Hébert's fate.

* * *

Whether bodily or mentally sick, Danton got leave of absence from the Convention, and retired for six weeks, with his young wife, to his beloved birthplace, Arcis-sur-Aube, and the society of his mother and stepfather. Tradition has preserved some information as to what he did, how he lived, and what he said, then and there; and it so happens that Madame Roland, in the prison of Saint-Pélagie, concerns herself at the same time with Danton. By contrasting what she *thinks* Danton is about, and what he is actually doing, we can discover how much we ought to rely on her other slanderous statements.

She writes in her *Mémoires :* —

"O Danton ! it is thus thou sharpenest thy knife against thy victims. Strike ! One more will add but little to thy crimes ; but their multitude cannot fathom thy scoundrelism, nor save thee from infamy. As cruel as Marius, as frightful as Catiline, thou surpassest them in wicked deeds."

No ; poor Danton was not sharpening any knives against Madame Roland or anybody else. He was going about feeding his ducks, or planting with trees a meadow behind his house, which he wanted to convert into a garden. They tell a story of him from these days : —

One day a laborer hired by him cut himself seriously while at work. Every one else ran about bewildered, seeking assistance ; while Danton tore his shirt in pieces, stemmed the blood, bandaged the wound, and then took the workman up in his arms and carried him to his house, where he had good care taken of him.

Another story, told by his son, sets in still better relief the ravings of Madame Roland : —

Shortly after the 31st of October, the day of execution of the Girondists, Danton was one day walking in his garden, together with one of his neighbors, who afterwards was mayor of Arcis, when some one approached them with hurried steps, holding a paper in his hand.

"Good news !" cried the new-comer, "good news !"

"What is it ?" asked Danton.

"The Girondists have just lost their heads on the scaffold."

"And do you call that good news ?" exclaimed Danton, while his eyes filled with tears.

"Well, were they not factious ?"

"Factious! Have we not all been factious? We deserve death as much as they, and we probably shall have to travel the same road."

When somebody else reminded Danton of the crimes of the Girondists, he answered, "It ought to be held a sacred principle that a patriot must do wrong three times before we use him severely."

That was exactly the contrary to what Robespierre thought, and nothing can better serve to distinguish the two men; for the latter said, that, let a man have rendered ever so great services to the State, if he once sinned against "virtue" he should be "spit out."

Otherwise, the six weeks were passed by Danton in the company of his fellow-townsmen. Here as elsewhere he was in the highest degree social. He took his meals with open windows and doors, and it is said his neighbors stood in crowds in the open windows to see their great fellow-townsman eat and hear his talk.

He comes back to Paris in November. He and Camille Desmoulins, who lived in the same small street, and passed nearly all their leisure time in each other's homes, walked one evening along the Seine. The setting sun rendered the waters of the river purple. Suddenly Danton stopped.

"Look!" and his eyes became humid, "how it looks like blood! The Seine runs blood; there has been too much spilt. Go, take thy pen, *demand clemency*, and I shall support you."

Camille did write. *The Old Cordelier* was the result, and the noblest *memento* a writer could well have.

First, number one appeared, then number two; they were read. Besides Danton, who inspired the whole enterprise, it is said that these two numbers were shown to Robespierre in manuscript, who approved them on the whole, and made a few immaterial corrections.

Then the famous number three appeared. It lashed the system of the Terror that obtained, especially the "Law of the Suspects," under the pretence of being a translation from Tacitus from the period of Tiberius.

The success of this magnificent satire was enormous. People crowded round the shops of the newsdealers, and the price of each copy rose to a dollar and more. Camille, really a child in spirit, was childishly joyous at this success, and going home, it is said, took his little son Horace on his knees, and made him jump, singing, not knowing how truthfully he prophesied, "*Edamus et bibamus cras enim moriamur*" ("Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die").

"Do you really think," he said one day to his friend Bruno, a future marshal of the Empire, who called to lunch with him, "that they will attack me, me and my *Old Cordelier*, for asking for a Committee of Clemency and Justice? for wanting to consolidate the work of our Revolution? Why, I have the whole of France in my favor! I am read and applauded everywhere."

Then number four came out. In it Camille wrote, —

"Liberty! Is it nothing but an actress from the opera, with a red cap on? or perhaps the statue which David proposes to erect, forty-six feet high? If by 'Liberty' you do not mean, with me, principles, but only a piece of stone, surely there has never been a more stupid and costly idolatry than ours.

"No, my Liberty descended from heaven; is neither a nymph from the opera, nor a red cap, nor a dirty shirt. It is happiness, equality, justice, the Declaration of Rights; it is our sublime constitution. Do you want me to fall at the feet of that Liberty? spend all my blood for it? Then *open the prisons to the two hundred thousand citizens you call suspects*, for in our Declaration of Rights there are not mentioned at all any prisons of suspicion, but only prisons of arrest. You will exterminate all your enemies by the guillotine, but was there ever a greater folly? Can you make one perish on the scaffold without making ten enemies of his family and friends?"

This is too strong for the Terrorists; they bring it up in the Jacobin Club, where Robespierre proposes to burn the numbers, when Camille blurts out his famous reply, "But burning, Robespierre, is not answering," which makes the latter very angry. In that meeting Danton speaks some words to the effect that they should be careful how, in judging Camille, they make a fatal blow against the liberty of the press.

* * *

On the 4th of March, 1794, the Hébertists proceeded to overt acts of insurrection. They had, in their Club of the Cordeliers, a tableau of the *Rights of Man.* This they covered with black crape; "and," said Hébert, "it shall remain veiled till the 'moderates' — the Dantonists — are destroyed." And he went farther: he called upon the people of Paris to rise to overthrow the Revolutionary Government, and establish his own anarchic system by force. His attempt failed miserably, — only his own section declared itself willing to follow him, — and in consequence he and his followers were arrested and brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal. Then he had to feel the weight of the very law he himself had been the loudest in agitating for, — the law which allowed the Tribunal to close the defence after the lapse of three days, though Danton, who otherwise lent all his force and influence to the prosecution, was willing to grant him all the latitude of defence he wished. Hébert and party were executed the 24th of March, from five to six in the afternoon, as had lately become the fashion, since executions were now looked upon as popular spectacles.

The people in the streets hooted and mocked him, and applied to him the coarse and cruel vulgarities with which he had accompanied his victims to the scaffold in his paper. One enormity, however, was reserved for him which, like the one done to Bailly, I verily believe would not be perpetrated in any other civilized country but France, and which again shows the cruel disposition of Frenchmen. As Hébert lay prostrate on the guillotine, waiting for the knife, the executioner, Samson, — a royalist, by the way, — positively amused the crowd by playing with his terror; that is to say, he allowed, several times, the knife to descend halfway, raising it again, till he finally allowed it to descend to do its work; and the crowd enjoyed the sport hugely.

The fact is, that Hébert's execution gave not alone great satisfaction to the government and the Dantonists, whom it rid of a most dangerous fanatic, but also unbounded joy to the royalists and counter-revolutionists. For it cannot be denied that it was the turning point in this tragical part of the Revolution. Hébert was the first patriot condemned by the Tribunal. Marat had, eleven months before, been taken before it, on the accusation of the Girondists, but he had been triumphantly acquitted and carried away on the shoulders of the people; but now a patriot was condemned, and destined to prepare the way for so many others. Yet, even if Danton was aware of it, he could have done nothing else; it is just the pity of every new movement that it is loaded with fanatics who often destroy it by carrying things to extremes.

It is now that Danton delivers his last address in the Convention. Pache, the mayor of Paris, came, March 19, before that body, and protested in the name of the Commune its devotedness to the national representatives. Ruhl, the president, expressed his gratification, but at the same time reproached it with being somewhat tardy. Then Danton rose and said, —

"The national representative body should always maintain a worthy attitude. It ought not to mark a whole collective body with its displeasure because some of them have been guilty men. The General Council of the Commune has come to declare its loyalty. The president has showed himself dignified; his answer is worthy the majesty of the people. However, may we not have reason to fear that malecontents will misinterpret his expressions? In the name of our country, I say, let us not give the least cause for misunderstandings. If ever, when we are victors (and victory is already an assured thing), if ever, I say, private passions shall prevail over love of country, if ever they shall create a new abyss for liberty, *I shall be one of the first to precipitate myself into it.* The president has made a response full of severe justice, but it may be misinterpreted. Let us spare the Commune the sorrow of having been censured with bitterness."

The President. "I wish to reply from the Tribune. Come, my dear colleague, and occupy the chair meanwhile."

Danton. "No, president, speak from your seat; you occupy it worthily. [Applause.] If my remarks have sounded harshly, pardon them. See in me a brother who merely has frankly stated his opinion." The report adds, "Ruhl steps down from his seat, and throws himself into Danton's arms. This scene creates the liveliest enthusiasm in the assembly."

This was Danton's last speech. During the arrest and trial of the Hébertists his fate was, indeed, being sealed; for at that time two of Danton's closest friends, and both notable members of the Convention, were arrested. They were *Herault de Sechelles*, who drafted the Jacobin Constitution, falsely charged with giving asylum to an emigrant, and revealing the secrets of the Committee *of Public Welfare*, of which he was a member; and *Fabre d'Eglantine*, the noted dramatic author who had invented the new calendar, lately adopted. The charge against the latter was infamously outrageous, and is particularly damning to Robespierre, who bears the responsibility for the murders that now follow. The charge was, that he had forged a decree of the Convention in the interest of stock-jobbers and speculators; while the fact was, that, so far from having forged it or any thing else, he had been untiring, by his motions in the Convention, in *unmasking the forgers,* which fact was well known to Robespierre, who had repeatedly seconded and spoken in favor of these very motions.

I have said that Robespierre must bear the responsibility of Danton's execution, and that is simply because it could not have been effected without his sanction and even active support. If Robespierre had said, "No," Danton would have lived. Robespierre, moreover, was the person that principally benefited by the fall of his friend. But when historians, and especially those Positivists who have done so much to rehabilitate Danton, insist that his execution was Robespierre's work from beginning to end, that Robespierre had first conceived the idea and initiated it, I deny it. It must be noted that Robespierre had, at least a dozen times after Danton's popularity began to wane, while his own was in the ascendant, taken Danton's part, and taken it warmly, even furiously. To have done so when at the same time he meditated his death, would stamp Robespierre as a most scoundrelly hypocrite, which there is no evidence he was. Further, Robespierre had no reason to wish Danton's removal; the latter being, as we have seen, without any ambition at all. Danton was well aware of this, and used to say, "All will go well as long as people say 'Robespierre and Danton,' but I shall be in danger if they ever commence to say 'Danton and Robespierre.'" And at no time did Danton charge Robespierre with being the author of his misfortune.

He well enough knew that his most dangerous enemy was *Billaud-Varennes*. Yes, it was Billaud who pursued Danton with an implacable hostility, and did not tire, till at last he had persuaded Robespierre to give his consent to Danton's loss; and he lived long enough to heartily repent of his act. Billaud was three years older than Danton; a lawyer, like him; had been second only to Marat in egging on to the September massacres; entered the Convention as a member from Paris, and became immediately known as one of the chiefs of the Mountain. He entered the Committee of Public Welfare on the 6th of September, and took part in all its future patriotic labors, but also, and that as a leader, in all its terrorism. For while he undoubtedly was a patriot, and, as the future showed, a man of inflexible rectitude, moreover, a man of untiring industry when working under leadership, he was also a bloody, implacable Terrorist. That determined his hostile attitude to Danton. It was on principle that he pursued Danton: it was the hatred of the Terrorist to the man of pity. And that hatred dated already from the September massacres. It is Courtois de l'Aube who, in his notes on the Revolution, has given us this insight: "It will, no doubt, astonish a great many people when I say that one of the sources of the hatred they nourished towards Danton was simply that he had not, in the days of 2d and 3d of September, played the part they wished him to play, and that from this moment he was looked upon as a man without revolutionary character. Many patriots may remember that these complaints came often from the mouth of Billaud." It is because Danton had shown himself heretofore a man of pity, and because he is now the chief of the party of clemency, that he perishes.

At the time of the arrest of Fabre d'Églantine, Billaud let these words of menace escape him: "Damnation to him who has sat at the side of Fabre [to wit, Danton], and who is yet his dupe." A little later, in full committee, he proposes, without any circumlocution, the arrest of Danton. But Robespierre is not yet won over: he is still almost scandalized; he rises, and cries out in a fury to Billaud, "Wilt thou then destroy all the best patriots?" That there may be no doubt of Billaud's being the responsible author, here are words he uttered after the fall of Robespierre: "If the death of Danton be a crime, I accuse myself of it, for I was the first to denounce Danton. I have said, 'If Danton continues to live, liberty will be lost;'" and "Danton is the only representative of the people whose punishment I have caused, because he seemed to me the most dangerous conspirator." Let him, then, have the honor of his fateful work.

But, undoubtedly, after Robespierre had allowed himself to be persuaded to kill off Danton, he hunted him to his death in the most odious manner. He not only dished up the stale charges of their common enemies, the Girondists, as to his honesty, but especially made it a crime in Danton that he was a whole man, delighting in the enjoyments of life, and liking to satirize his own Puritanic notions. One of the most remarkable of his accusations is this: that Danton once clasped the sister of Robespierre's bride, with whom he had years of acquaintance, round her waist, saying, "There is one thing that will cure you, my little friend, and that is, to get a husband." At this time it is said that Danton had an interview with Robespierre, in which he tried to get the latter away from the influence of Billaud. Toward the conclusion Danton said something to the effect that it was well enough to be terrible towards royalists and conspirators, but that it was even more important to distinguish between the innocent and the guilty. "And dost thou say that one innocent has perished?" flared up Robespierre. "What! not one innocent? What sayest thou, Paris?" addressing the bailiff of the Revolutionary Tribunal, who was present.

From this time, and to his last moment, many of Danton's remarks that have been preserved are most touching, and all of them, with but very few exceptions, are in a noble vein; while Robespierre's conduct and remarks become inexpressibly mean. When Danton's friends warned him of his danger, and implored him to act, he said, "No; I would rather be guillotined than guillotine others." When they implored him to flee the country, he made a reply which Frenchmen have not forgotten to this day, even if forgetting its author: "Do we, then, carry our country on the bottom of our shoe-soles?"

In the still hour of the night of March 30, 1794, the three committees, of Public Welfare, of Public Security, and on Legislation, met together, when, on the motion of Saint-Just, Robespierre's henchman, the order for the arrest of Danton, Camille Desmoulins, and Lacroix was signed. Carnot, the great war minister, remarked, "These are only suspicions; you have not a single proof," but signed anyway. Robert Lindet, a Dantonist, and Ruhl, an Alsatian, refused to sign; the former saying, "I am here to work for my country, not to kill off patriots." In the early morning of March 31 the three Conventionals were arrested in their homes, and taken to Luxembourg Palace.

On entering the prison the first words of Danton were, "At length I perceive that in revolutions the supreme power ultimately rests with the most abandoned." Still, if Danton had not thrown off responsibility, this would probably not have been so here. At all events, this is what must be prevented for the future, and which can be prevented by *men of good will organizing themselves for effecting the changes that clearly must be made.*

One of the first prisoners he met there was another Conventional, the American Thomas Paine, to whom he gave his hand, saying, in English, "What you have done for the happiness and liberty of your country, I have in vain attempted to do for mine. I have been less fortunate, but not more guilty." They were put into the room that the Girondins had occupied. There he said with energy, "It was just a year ago that I caused the Revolutionary Tribunal to be instituted. I beg pardon for it of God and man. My object was to prevent new September massacres, and not to let loose a new scourge upon mankind." Then, giving way to his contempt for his colleagues who were murdering him, he exclaimed, "These brother Cains know nothing about government. I leave every thing in a frightful disorder." For a moment he showed regret at having taken part in the Revolution, saying it was much better to be a poor fisherman than to govern men.

The next day the Convention is informed of the arrest, effected over night, and its formal assent asked to taking the accused before the Revolutionary Tribunal. The Convention is thunderstruck. Legendre, Danton's faithful lieutenant on Aug. 10, makes the motion that he be heard at the bar of the Convention in his own defence. If that had been granted, Danton's voice and his good cause undoubtedly would have righted matters. But a mere sneer of Robespierre negatives the motion, showing at once the great ascendency he had now acquired, and his contemptible meanness. "Legendre," he said, "has talked of Danton because he thinks a privilege attaches to that name. We want to know of no privileges at all; *we want no idols*. It is *a breach of equality* to render more favor to one citizen than to another."

The "trial," so called, is not worth discussing, for it was no trial at all. It is worth noting, to his honor, that Paris, the bailiff of the Tribunal, with splendid courage came forward and embraced the accused, his friends, on their entrance. The accusation against them, that they *had conspired to restore the monarchy*, was, of course, arrant nonsense. They were convicted without a particle of evidence against them; without *one* of the score of witnesses in their favor, that they called for, being permitted to appear; with their mouths brutally shut by a special law passed for the occasion; and they were condemned to death, all as a matter of course. It is at this moment that Camille, in impotent rage at the shameless farce, tears some documents to pieces and throws them at the heads of the jurors; and *these* are the "bullets of bread" which Carlyle, in his history, makes the accused, in their "levity," throw in the faces of their judges!

At the moment of hearing his sentence Danton said these memorable words: "I feel a consolation in believing that *the man who is to die as chief of the faction of the merciful, will find grace in the eyes of posterity.*" How harsh these words should grate in the ears of "posterity"!

The next afternoon, at the usual hour, the fatal cart, with Danton and his friends, passed the usual route. But this time there was no jeering. There was perfect stillness everywhere. The people felt that their friends were passing by them; but how it all came about, they did not seem to understand at all. The cart went past the house where Robespierre lived; all the shutters were closely drawn. At that moment Danton looked up at the windows, and broke out, "Imbecile! He kills me, and I am the only man who could save him." There is certainly nothing that shows Robespierre's imbecility so much as not to be able to see that Hébert's execution formed a terrible crisis; that, while it was imperatively necessary to get rid of him, it was more than ever necessary to protect the rest of the patriots.

Then the heads of the Dantonists commence to drop in the fateful basket. At length steps forth Hérault de Séchelles, the handsome nobleman who had been such a true friend of the people, with a rose in his hand. He wants to embrace Danton, but is prevented by the executioner. "You stupid!" says Danton, "you cannot prevent our heads from kissing each other in yonder basket." A curious coincidence characterizes the period perfectly. There was then played in the theatres of Paris a piece which represented the *fête* of Aug. 10, 1793. The Convention was shown assembled on the Place de Bastille, with its president, none other than Hérault de Séchelles, drinking a toast in water to Nature. At the very hour when the actor who represented Hérault drank to Nature, the true Hérault, a short distance away, laid his head on the block as a traitor to the fatherland. What a contrast!

Then came Camille, who, in rage, had torn nearly all his clothes from his body, cursing Robespierre, who had been for twenty years his friend, and a few years ago was a witness to his marriage with the handsome Lucile. "What a style and what a handsome wife he had!" they yet say in France, when speaking of him, as they often do. Indeed, the personal and polemical journalism which is such an abuse in that country, comes chiefly from the admiration which young French journalists feel for poor Camille, his style — and his wife.

Last came Danton himself. At the foot of the scaffold he seemed moved, and was heard to lament, "O my dearly loved wife, whom I shall see no more!" Then he checked himself, saying, "Danton, *no weakness!*"

A man who happened to be an eye-witness, and who has written his reminiscences, describes his last moment thus: —

"Danton was the last to appear upon the platform, red with the blood of his friends. At the foot of the horrible statue [of Liberty], whose enormous mass was outlined against the sky, I saw the tribune stand, like one of Dante's shadows, half illumined by the dying sun, looking rather as if newly arisen from the tomb than ready to go into it. Nothing was ever seen more brave than the demeanor of this atlas of the Revolution, more formidable than the expression of the face which defied the axe, than the bearing of the head which, though about to fall, seemed still to dictate laws. Terrible picture! time will never efface it from my memory. I perfectly comprehend the feeling which inspired him to utter his last words, — these terrible words, that I could not hear, but which were repeated in trembling horror and admiration: 'Do not forget,' he said to the executioner, 'to show my head to the people. It is good to look at.'"[1]

Thus ended the statesman of the Revolution, the patriot *par excellence*, the disinterested hero; so young, and yet so strong and wise; so able to organize, create, and govern!

But Billaud-Varennes lived to repent. Three months afterwards he contributes to Robespierre's fall. On April 1, 1795, he is himself condemned, for some words in favor of the masses, by the Girondins of the Convention, to deportation to Cayenne. There he lives as an agriculturist, and is the only one who peremptorily refuses the amnesty of Bonaparte. His wife had secured a divorce from him; married a second time, a wealthy man; becomes a widow; and then she invites Billaud to come and share her wealth. He refuses this offer also, with the words, "There are faults that are unpardonable." At the time of the Restoration he moves to Hayti, where he dies. In his later days he used to say, "I had too direct a share in Danton's death, and I did it with a horrible hatred. The misfortune of revolutions is, that we must act too hastily; we have no time to examine. We seem to be in a violent fever, and are in a mortal dread that our ideas will miscarry, for lack of energy. Danton and his friends were able men, true patriots, and we massacred them! They had not, like us, clean hands (*sic!*); they loved luxury too much: but they had noble(!) and revolutionary hearts. You will some day learn to know their services; then the true history of these times will be written. Danton showed admirable courage in '92 and '93: *he made Aug. 10.* He did not care for the show of power; but what immense calmness and activity under the most difficult circumstances! what breadth of mind! what ability!

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[1] A. V. Arnault: *Souvenirs of a Sixty-Year-Old Man.*

"I am now sincerely convinced that there would have been no 18th *Brumaire*, no Bonaparte, if Danton and Robespierre had lived and remained united."

Dr. Robinet asks pertinently, *apropos* of the above, "How do 'noble hearts' and 'unclean hands' rhyme together?" But the confession of the crime is worth having.

* * *

I called Danton *disinterested*—yes, pure, unselfish, as much so as Sir Harry Vane, he was, in spite of the loads of calumny that have been heaped on him.

Oh, it is a burning shame to France that her deliverer should have lain for seventy years under this heap of obloquy before any one tried to do him justice! that all the historians of the Revolution should have contributed to blacken his memory by retailing the same charges! And what shall I say of Victor Hugo, who in his novel *Ninety-Three*, in an imagined dialogue between Danton and Marat, puts him in the pillory as a venal demagogue, for his countrymen to gaze on and loathe? With the fullest conviction of the injustice done to Danton, I say that this dialogue deserves to be branded as Voltaire's *La Pucelle* has been. For now we know from Dr. Robinet's books, *The Private Life of Danton* and *The Trial of the Dantonists*, and from the official documents therein at length set forth, that every one of the charges against his honesty and purity of life is absolutely false, *every one!*

I said all historians have retailed the same charges; that is to say, each of them, one after the other, has repeated the same charges, without trying to verify them at all, so that we find, by going far enough back, that they all proceed from Mirabeau and three personal enemies,—Lafayette, Madame Roland, and Robespierre.

We have already had one specimen of Madame Roland's reliability. Now we shall see one of her proofs. Shortly after the 10th of August a robbery of a considerable portion of the royal treasures was committed. Concerning that, she writes: "I have had this morning a visit from one of the robbers of the *garde-meubles;* he came to see if he was suspected.—Who, then?—Fabre d'Églantine [who at that time was Danton's private secretary].—How do you know?—How? Can such an outrage be the work of any one but the audacious Danton? I do not know if this *truth* will ever be mathematically proven, *but I feel it acutely*" (!)

And such an accusation, though the robbers were shortly after caught and executed, it is that Victor Hugo gives currency to!

But the first regular charge made, among others, by Lafayette, is, that the King paid Danton an enormous sum, really as a bribe, but under the pretence of being a compensation for the abolition of his office as King's counsellor. But we know, from *official documents* published in *The Private Life of Danton*, exactly what he paid for his office, and also what he received as compensation, and we discover that he received *exactly* what he was entitled to. With that amount he bought land in his native town, and on his death we find him possessed of precisely that land and nothing else.

Then, they charge him with misappropriating the large sums of money that had been intrusted to him when he was virtual dictator, in '92. The answer is categoric, that he did account for every *sou*, but that, as to the *secret* expenditures, he refused to account *publicly — what no law required of him*. He did, however, render an account of the same to the *council of ministers*. (See *The Private Life of Danton.*) In a previous chapter I have suggested a probable reason for this refusal.

Again: they charge him with misappropriating, while in Belgium, large sums of money intrusted to him as a Representative on Mission, and with carrying away with him large loads of plunder, on leaving the country. It is *proven* by Cambon, finance minister of the republic, that he accounted for the money, and *proven* in other ways that he carried absolutely nothing away with him *but his own clothes*. (See *The Private Life of Danton.*)

There remains, then, but one charge, which is worthy of notice only because Mirabeau makes it. He states in a letter to a friend at court, Count Lamarck, as a matter of gossip, but also as a matter of course, that Danton "yesterday received thirty thousand livres" from the royal treasury.

Now, much has been made of the circumstance, especially by Louis Blanc, that this was a private letter which the writer not for a moment thought would ever be published; but afterwards it came out that Mirabeau particularly charged his friend to publish this very correspondence after his death.

On its face, all must admit it looks ludicrous that Danton, the destroyer of royalty, the man who from the very start of the Revolution fought the court step by step, and was its most persistent opponent, should have been in its pay.

But Mirabeau says so, says so positively, and is in a position to know.

Yes, but remember that Mirabeau, also, himself was in the habit of receiving bribes: this is notorious. He did not see any thing wrong in it at all; he does not mean to blame Danton at all for it. He simply states the "fact," I say, as a *matter of gossip.*

Now suppose a parallel case. Suppose a woman of notoriously easy virtue write to a friend of equally easy virtue, that "Miss so and so has relations with Mr. so and so." Ought this to *convict this young lady, without a particle of corroborative evidence?* Well, the case against Danton is not a particle stronger than the one I have supposed. *There is not a rag of testimony corroborating this charge.* All the papers of the King and court were ransacked after his deposal; and, while they furnished damning testimony against Mirabeau, *there was not an iota implicating Danton.* Louis Blanc, also, is compelled to admit, "If Danton received this corrupting gold, he by no means earned it, and served the Revolution none the less vehemently."

I close this portion by quoting this explicit denial of Danton at a meeting of the Jacobins, Dec. 3, 1793, when attacked by the Hébertists.

"You will be astonished, when I lay bare to you my private affairs, to see the colossal fortune which my enemies and yours have charged me with, reduced to the little amount of property which I have always had. I defy my opponents to furnish the proof of any crime whatever by me." And he demanded that the society appoint a committee of twelve to examine the charges, which, however, after a defence by Robespierre, was thought needless.

And then, the still more untenable charge, by Lafayette and others, that he was a *débauché*, and "monstrously immoral." Is it to be a *débauché* to have been married twice, and to have loved both wives passionately? For, as far as it is possible to have certainty in such matters, these are the only women with whom Danton ever had any carnal relation. He was, as already said, an excellent family man, delighting to pass all his leisure in the company of his mother, his stepfather, his wife, and children, as testified to by all, especially by his young faithful disciple, Rousselin de Saint-Albin, a well-known character under Louis Philippe. He was no gambler. What, then, are his "great vices" ? He lived economically but decently, delighting in company and the healthy enjoyments of life — that is all.

I have often thought of how differently things might have turned out for all parties and for France, if, instead of Danton marrying Mademoiselle Charpentier, and Mademoiselle Phlipon becoming Madame Roland, these two persons had met and mated. True, Danton's first wife was a most noble woman ; but unfortunately she died too early, and Danton precisely needed the *ambitious* helpmate which Mademoiselle Phlipon would have been. True, also, that Madame Roland found Danton unbearably ugly, but Madame Danton did not think him so at all ; and the same ambition that made the old man Roland a desirable mate to her, might have rendered Danton handsome in her eyes, especially since her ambition would have been really gratified.

A few words as to Danton's rhetorical resources. That he was eloquent, all, of course, admit ; that is evident from the fact that he more than once was able, by simply delivering a speech, to bring about most stupendous results, and that not with the masses, but in the Convention, of which so many learned and distinguished men were members. His gestures and his delivery must, from indication furnished by the reports, have played a great *rôle* on such occasions ; but it is impossible to get a true idea of them now, since tradition is very contradictory on these points. The notion that he ever used coarse language is false. All his speeches have been collected, and they are absolutely classical, and will come to be so considered more and more in the future.

He was always most solicitous for the dignity of the Convention; for instance, on occasion of Hébert's atheistical masquerades, which he put an end to by thundering out, "This must be put a stop to!" He possessed the precious quality, almost alone among his contemporaries, of speaking to the point.

It has been made a reproach to him, that, when he had the multitude on his side, he generally flattered its passions, and frequently inflamed his audience still more by violent, extravagant language; while when, on the other hand, the masses were against him, he seemed afraid to oppose them. This is a very serious reproach, and, if true, would stamp him as a moral coward. I admit, that, on superficial view, the charge seems well founded. There is no doubt that he frequently accentuated the fury of his audience. But on a closer study we discover, I think, a complete justification, from an oratorical point of view. First let me premise, that whenever he flings forth savage, ferocious words, as he now and then does, they are always aimed at *generalities*. "He appeared," as Mignet observes, "inexorable in regard to classes, humane and generous towards individuals." Therefore whenever he uses such phrases — and they are very rare — as "Let us drink the blood of aristocrats!" "Let an aristocratic head fall every day!" (the very worst that can be picked out), they never cause any harm. He *never* excited the people's passions against individuals. But this is the point: his use of such phrases was an adroit rhetorical manœuvre; he wanted to seem to be in accord with his audience, even to go beyond them, in order to *insinuate moderate measures, to bring them to adopt some sensible measure.* This is visible in very many of his discourses; for instance (p. 164), where he moves to amend the impracticable plan of Lepelletier. This was always the case, but particularly on the occasion when he uttered the above murderous words. It was the stormy session of Sept. 15, 1793, alluded to in the previous chapter. Billaud had moved that the Revolutionary Tribunal be divided into four sections, *and that a "guillotine follow each section.*" By the words, " Let us drink the blood of aristocrats," he absolutely made his audience forget the latter part of Billaud's proposal, and thus took the savage sting from it. This should be insisted on, to Danton's eternal honor, that his ulterior aim was always good; that he never, *never*, even in his most savage mood, intended to lead his hearers to do a wicked thing. And what seems moral cowardice in the face of a hostile multitude was, as we have already seen in the case of the war for propaganda and the Law of the Suspects, a deep-settled conviction in his mind that it is good statesmanship to bend the head to storms of passionate excitement, in order to act with courageous decision when the storm is over. All that can be contended is, that he went too far in this policy, stooped too low; for instance once, when he invoked protection from "the shadow of Marat," — from the "individual" whom, living, he had heartily despised.

It was in this same session of Sept. 15 that he caused to be passed the well-known law of the *forty sous*, which has generally been considered a demagogic measure. I think Danton has here been completely misunderstood; that he did not propose this law as an *economic measure at all.* It was in this session that Hébert's and Billaud's influence commenced to be paramount. Their followers consisted of that part of the Parisian population that devoted all their days and time to politics, — the kind of persons we know too well here in New York City. *To offset their influence*, and checkmate it as much as possible, by bringing the hard-working, patriotic majority, that *could not afford to leave their work without compensation*, to the sections, it was, that he proposed that the sections should be legally assembled but twice a week, and should have their loss of time reimbursed on demand. That puts the measure in a very different light.

But do not believe that I want to make Danton into a saint. While I firmly believe him an uncorrupted and incorruptible man, I must say that he sometimes was not above corrupting others, and was even cynical about it. I do not now speak of the possible bribe to the mistress of the King of Prussia, which many honest souls would excuse, considering a bribe that saves one's country from ruin in war, merely a *ruse* of war.

No, I refer to something else. In a speech delivered in September, 1793, he declares that with gold they ought to conquer the Lyonnaise insurrection. These are his words : —

"I say that with three or four millions we might have reconquered Toulon for France, and hung the traitors who delivered that city to the English. You will say, your decrees have no entrance there. Well, has the corrupting gold of your enemies not had entrance? You have put fifty millions at the disposition of the Committee *of Public Welfare.* That is not enough. Undoubtedly a hundred millions would be well spent, if they served to conquer liberty. *If we had rewarded the patriotism of the popular societies at Lyons,* that city would not be in the state in which it is. I suppose no one does not know that we need secret expenses in order to save the country."

Indeed, everybody knew that. But Danton was entirely too frank, and this they called *cynical.* In those days they would blush to talk loudly about money. To corrupt the enemy might be a sad necessity, but to talk of "rewarding the zeal of republicans" (!) that was too much for the manners of the time. This, no doubt, did much to lessen his influence in these fatal autumn months of '93, when it was so much needed.

* * *

Especially when judged by the fashion of the times or by the habits of his contemporaries, Danton indulged but rarely in hyperbolic language, and still more seldom was he flippant; but he did so indulge, and flippantly, in one instance, before the Revolutionary Tribunal, of which his serious Positivist admirers, I am sorry to say, seem to feel proud. Asked for his name and residence, as a matter of form, he gave for answer, "*Ma demeure sera bientôt dans le néant*" ("My home will soon be nothingness"). This, on first view, will prejudice refined and cultured Anglo-Saxons against him, since with themselves doubts about God and immortality cause pain, at all events. Yet something can be said for his beliefs, as far as we know them, the flippancy aside. This may be found in the fact that the French Revolution, as it denoted a transition in economic, political, and social relations, it likewise was a transition phase from the religion of the Middle Ages to the religion of the future.

Danton repudiated *atheism*. On one occasion he proposed festivals where the people could worship the Supreme Being, the Lord of nature, "for *we have not destroyed superstition to establish the reign of atheism*." Danton, as well as Diderot, denounced "the great superstition;" that is to say, the *popular*, the *dogmatic* conception, in the first place, of God. They repudiated the idea of a *lawless* despot, omnipotent, and consequently siding with the rich and powerful of this world. And when we read in a late work, *Groundwork of Economics*, by an orthodox believer, that the only valid reason why the many shall toil for the few is the *evident will of God*, then even to atheism, as a protest against such a God, against *false gods*, one may become reconciled. But Danton could not possibly be wanting in faith in the *Ideal*, he who moved thousands to sacrifice their lives for liberty and fatherland.

And in like manner the revolutionists repudiated the popular ideas of *immortality*. Cultured people of the future will hardly be able to do without the hope of immortality. William Morris's idea, that people will by and by be so happy on earth that they will be dreadfully afraid of death, seems to me preposterous; and George Eliot's conception, of living in the thoughts of posterity, will hardly suffice. But if the idea of immortality shall commend itself to the instructed minds of the future, it evidently must be cleared of its earthly dross, — precisely that against which the Encyclopædists protested. The desire to remember our earthly experiences, to remember whether we have been kings or beggars here, will be accounted by our posterity simply a passing weakness of the flesh, I am sure, and death be looked upon as a sponge that wipes out our *memory* (as diseases, in some well-authenticated instances, have done completely: a *new memory* thereupon having been formed), while it is the *ego*, the *I*, vouched for by *consciousness*, that will be held to persist.

But, at all events, Danton was a faithful instrument to the Power behind Evolution, — an unselfish instrument, and that is the essential thing. His heroic cry, "*May my name be accursed, if but the cause be saved!*" should always be remembered whenever his name be spoken. It certainly is better to do the will of God while denying his name, than to acknowledge it while defying his will.

How grateful France should feel to Danton, its deliverer! How grateful, especially, its *bourgeoisie*, the beneficiary of his herculean labor! But look! for seventy years there hardly was even a peasant's hut or a workman's shop that did not have the picture of a Bonaparte (!) Danton's was found nowhere.

* * *

Robespierre, though not the originator of the act, was, by his sanction of it, the murderer of Danton and friends. He became the beneficiary of the executions — nominally;

that is to say, he had for four months the honor of being the sole man to whom to look up in France, but also the cloak behind which Billaud and his fellow-Terrorists could safely terrorize. Thus the latter ones were the real beneficiaries. Let us simply compare the number of executions up to Danton's death, and after.

From Aug. 17, 1792, to Oct. 2, 1793, more than a year, — that is to say, the period when Danton had power, — there were 90 executions. From Oct. 2, '93, to April 5, '94, six months, and while he was powerless, there were 462 more; in all, 552 executions. But *after* his death, from April 5, '94, to July 28, '94, for three months and three weeks, they rise to *2,085* executions, or *20 a day* on an average. The most atrocious of these was that of the sweet, lovely, innocent Lucile, wife of Camille, just one week after her husband's death, without a motive at all. Yet, in order to be perfectly fair, we should remember that at this contemporary period there was many a year when just as many executions took place in Great Britain as during the whole "year of Terror;" only, because the victims were mostly petty criminals, no notice was taken of them.

How came Robespierre to this immense power? Do not think for a moment that he imposed on the Convention as a whole, or on the really able men. Danton despised him, — that is, his capacity, — and so did most capable men. But all feared him, because he had the masses at his back. He had an enormous ascendency over the common people ever since Mirabeau's venality had been revealed. From thence the people saw in him, by contrast, the *Incorruptible;* and he *was* incorruptible. But for that very reason Robespierre should be a solemn warning to our own people, and teach us that incorruptibility is not enough, is *far from enough*, in a leader. He was the impersonification of incorruptibility *plus imbecility*.

We have already noted what that noble Girondin, Condorcet, thought of Danton. The following is what he had to say of Robespierre: —

"People ask themselves why so many women follow Robespierre everywhere, — home, to the Jacobins, to the Convention, to the Cordeliers. It is, that the French Revolution is a religion, and Robespierre makes a sect of it, — *he is a priest who has his devotees.* He preaches, he moralizes; he is furious, grave, melancholic, severe in his speech and his conduct; he thunders against the rich and the great; he spends but little, and has but few physical wants. His whole mission consists in talking, and he is almost always talking. He has disciples who guard his person; he in no way resembles the founder of a religion, but in many ways the founder of a sect. He always has God and providence on his lips. He proclaims himself the champion of the poor and the weak; he affects the company of women and the childlike; he gravely accepts their homage and veneration. He hides himself at the approach of danger, and does not re-appear till the danger is over."

Robespierre, undoubtedly, was sincerely attached to the masses. He went as far as anybody — remember his constitutional proposals in regard to business and property — in advocating economic measures in the interest of the poor. He wanted the State to exist for them, and the government to be carried on for their benefit. Like all Jacobins, he believed that the government should be conducted by the competent and wise; but he further held that he, Robespierre, was the only person competent to govern. He verily fancied that his God had sent him on purpose to govern France; that he was the very prophet of God.

First of all, then, he wanted to *moralize* men. "We want," he said, "in our country, to substitute morality in place of egoism, principles in place of customs, duty instead of pleasure, greatness instead of vanity, love of glory instead of love of money;" in a word, to put all the virtues in place of all the vices. That, precisely, was what Danton did *not* want; he had no ambition to change the inner man, but he did want to surround his fellow-men with better material conditions.

This made Danton a strong, wise man, and that rendered Robespierre an imbecile, a fool.

Now, it is easy to understand Robespierre's intolerance, his cruelty. All who differed from him were *bad* people; no conciliation with them! Oh, no; cut their heads off!

His folly went so far that he verily believed that society was at his disposal, and so independent of all its past development that he could refashion it to suit himself by simple legislation, and with the guillotine for sanction.

No wonder he did not accomplish any thing. Though he for four months had more absolute power in France than Louis XIV. possessed, he initiated not a single measure for founding the republic; not to one decree of public utility did he attach his name. There are only two measures to mark his reign, — one the puerile *fête* to the Supreme Being, really a *fête* to himself, and that most extraordinary decree ever passed, the infamous law of *Prairial* (of June), suppressing *all* testimony and *all* defence by those accused before the Revolutionary Tribunal.

It is Robespierre's sad honor to be the exclusive author of this law, whose efficiency may be seen from the fact, that, of the 2,085 executed after the death of Danton, only 739 belong to the period before the passage of the law (*67 days*), and *1,346 to the period thereafter* (*47 days*). It is said, and without doubt correctly, that the use he meant to put the law to was, to rid himself of his Terrorist fellow-members of committees. The latter seem to have become aware of it, and anticipated him.

There is a twofold reason why he succumbed. The Parisians have been cited as an example of popular ingratitude in not saving even their greatest idol. That is wrong. They were, at all events, not fickle ingrates: they still trusted in Robespierre; indeed, there was no one else left for them to trust in. They would have responded to his call, and undoubtedly have carried him through, if he had appealed to them; but also for that he was too imbecile.

Next, his adversaries succeeded because they played off the Convention against him. They proposed to abolish the absolute committee, and restore power to the Convention; they *organized* the Convention for that purpose, and this proved the stronger force. But, in destroying the cloak that had hitherto sheltered them, they were compelled to cease their Red Terror. Robespierre, who had given a mock trial to Danton, did not get even that much himself: he was simply declared an outlaw, to be guillotined whenever laid hands on. A *gensd'arme* fired upon him, breaking his jaw, before securing him.

With the fall of Robespierre, then, ends the absolute "Revolutionary" Government. But, unluckily, at the same time ends the *strong* government, advocated by Danton; and anarchy virtually reigns for five years, till Bonaparte steps upon the scene. And with his fall ends, moreover, the government *for the masses;* the plutocrats are again restored to power, and henceforth France is governed *by the plutocrats for the plutocrats.*

Looking back over the episode of the fourteen months' rule of the Jacobins, the thought occurs to me, that possibly events might have had another course, if all the leaders had not been such *young* men. They were all, at most, thirty to thirty-five years old when they fell. Mature and ripened age does, after all, count for something.

* * *

Robespierre's shibboleth was *Equality*, as *Liberty* for a time had been Danton's.

Saint-Just, the fanatic youth and Robespierre's closest friend, ended the speech in which he demanded of the committees Danton's arrest, with these ominous words: "Our people must learn to be modest; the solid, *highest good is obscure probity*." The natural conclusion from that was, that all heads that protruded above this ideal level of "obscure probity" should be cut off, as "factious."

That, candidly expressed, was Robespierre's philosophy in a nutshell, and the practical application of it was the execution of Danton and Lavoisier. The latter was the most illustrious French representative of science, to whom the office of a farmer-general of revenue had been conferred by Louis XVI. as a recognition of his scientific contributions. Under Robespierre, all farmers-general since the accession of Louis were prosecuted for the large incomes they had drawn from their offices, and all sentenced to death by the Revolutionary Tribunal, Lavoisier among them. He asked a few days' grace, in order to write down a discovery by him in chemistry; but Robespierre refused the prayer, as it would be a violation of "equality." Danton, it will be remembered, was brutally refused the privilege of defending himself at the bar of the Convention, because "We do not want any idols." Equality is certainly one requisite of democracy, but such an interpretation of it as that by Robespierre would destroy all progress.

In what, then, does true equality consist?

Let us for a moment consider its opposite, Carlyle's *hero worship*, — a sentimental reverence for great men, and contempt for the great mass. It is a prominent British characteristic. Let somebody do a worthy deed, and he will be appreciated nowhere more than in Great Britain. They have a high sense of *personal* claims, and that is commend-able; but their sense of *human* claims is weaker than elsewhere, as already remarked by Dr. Johnson: "Sir, we Englishmen do not yet understand the *common rights of humanity*." But there is a class among them of whom Mallock is the representative. If he were perfectly frank he would say, "Life is not worth living to any but an aristocracy. An aristocracy implies an *exclusive* class, implies that the mass of men be kept down. Then let them be kept down, for it is better that life be enjoyed by some than that it be enjoyed by none." This is a sentiment so selfish as to be Satanic, *and it is false.*

I think true equality lies between the two extremes. The great mass of humanity, *the commonwealth of mankind,* is a *holy object,* to labor for whose welfare is the only worthy living, the only true life. It is this mass, this commonwealth, this association of our kind, that every man among us is, jointly and equally with every other man, dependent upon for all he is and all he enjoys, and of it and of its well-being we are EQUAL PARTAKERS. But of this well-being we are not EQUAL PRODUCERS. There *are* superior men and women. We all have our superiors, recognized or unrecognized; and it is a very unhealthy state of affairs not to recognize our superiors when we meet them or have to work with them, as we constantly have to do. It is especially our plutocrats, and not our working-classes, who exhibit a vulgar arrogance, puerile self-complacency, and wanton insolence and effrontery towards their true superiors; and with their class this unhealthy sentiment will probably disappear.

But it is only when genius works for the general good that it is entitled to consideration. The greatest genius under heaven is only a nuisance, and ought unceremoniously to be swept into oblivion, if he serves but his own individual vanity, and *holds aloof from the common life.* The reward of the superior person is his share of the common well-being.

Therefore also it is, that immortality can be admitted only of what is common to us all, — what *unites* us to each other, not of what *discriminates* us from each other. The religion of the past nourishes an arrogant, self-seeking, sneaking hope of and striving after personal private blessings; and this is precisely what condemns it as essentially *vicious*, ANTI-SOCIAL. The religion of the future will teach us that we are, above all, *social* beings, and know of no blessings which our fellows cannot legitimately share. It will inculcate that the SAME destiny, whatever it be, is awaiting us all.

The last reported words of Robespierre, spoken when he was lying on a table in the anteroom of the Convention, with broken jaws, waiting to be guillotined, indicate that he was conscious that his "equality" was at an end. Under the rule of the Jacobins the form of address was always *citoyen* ("citizen") and *citoyenne* ("citizeness"), as it, in fact, is in our days everywhere among French Socialists. But when a bystander took pity on Robespierre and handed him a glass of water, he thanked him by using the old form, so long in disuse: "*Merci*, MONSIEUR!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE PRESENT TRANSITION STATE.

July 28, 1794, to our days.

> "*If a great change is to be made in human affairs, the minds of men will be fitted to it, the general opinions and feelings will draw that way. Every fear, every hope, will favor it. Then they who persist in opposing this mighty current in human affairs will appear to resist rather the decree of Providence itself than the mere designs of men.*" — BURKE: *Thoughts on the French Revolution.*

PLUTOCRATS AGAIN IN POWER. — 18TH BRUMAIRE. — "THOU HAST BEEN WEIGHED AND FOUND WANTING." — PRESENT TENDENCIES OF SOCIETIES. — IN PROPORTION AS THE MENTAL PREPARATION IS COMPLETE, WILL THE COMING REVOLUTION BE EASY. — "GOD WILLS IT."

SO the "episode," the *interregnum*, is at an end; the rule *for* the masses is over. The plutocrats return to power; they resume their suspended legitimate dominion, — the dominion *by the plutocrats for the plutocrats. Ça ira!* Indeed, "it goes," without interruption, until our days; yes, and a little beyond.

It is perfectly in order that the proscribed Girondins, as many as are yet alive, return to their vacant seats in the Convention. They can now safely take charge of the helm of state; for France and the Revolution are secure, thanks to the Jacobins, and to Danton especially. Only moderate firmness is now required.

However, the first exhibition they make of their firmness is the so-called "White Terror," the terribly bloody revenge they take on the Jacobins. But so it has always been in France since that fatal massacre in 1791 on the Champ de

Mars. Whenever a new party gets the upper hand, *whichever it is,* always the tiger in the Frenchman comes to the surface. The first thing attended to is always revenge.

Next, the plutocrats, especially the speculators, indulge in perfect economic orgies. Immediately they abolish the *maximum;* so glorious Free Competition reigns henceforth untrammelled. What does it matter that famine once more decimates the Parisians? A still more important measure is the re-opening of the Exchange.

Their objective point is, all the time, land, land, of which, as we saw, the State has become seized to an immense amount. In previous chapters we left the speculators in possession of a great lot of national estates, — about four hundred million dollars worth, — for which, as a rule, they had paid but the first instalment of twelve per cent, but with a decree for the distribution of the communal lands among the *poor*, and another, promising a milliard's worth of land to the soldiers in their way. How shall they get more land into their hands? "Ah, let us get up lotteries." Why not? Soon the hideous lottery is in open blast in Paris, laying the foundation for some of the finest fortunes of to-day. But the most popular manner of securing possession of land is to become a *riz-pain-sel* (rice-bread-salt), — a contractor for one of the numerous armies, — and take land in payment, generally by a roundabout process, by which the nation is enormously swindled in various ways. One of these ways, of course, is, to furnish poor articles at extravagant prices; another, to depreciate the *assignats*, as hereafter to be told.

A new constitution, of course, they must have. That is the one known as the Constitution of '95, — virtually that of '91, with Montesquieu's pet idea of two chambers introduced. But, in the new constitution, there is an article that shows how anxious the plutocrats are to have their possessions — their thefts rather — legalized: it is section 374, which reads as follows: —

"The French nation proclaims, as a guaranty of public faith, that the legitimate holder of the national estates, *whatever the origin of title, shall never be dispossessed.*"

When, then, French *bourgeois* prate of society resting on property, they mean on scandals and robberies.

At last the Convention puts an end to its existence, after having created an executive power in the Directory, whose members consist of those exclusively *who had voted for Louis' death;* for now this test becomes of capital importance to France. Shortly afterwards the French people — or, rather, the French electors — get more and more re-actionary; to such an extent, finally, that the majority of the lower Chamber is royalist. Had Louis XVIII. at that time been recalled, it might have been fatal to the Revolution; the old *régime* would certainly have been restored in many essential features. But the fact that the Directory are all regicides saves it, — saves the republic against the electors by committing, with the assistance of the young republican general Hoche, the *coup d'état* of 18th *Fructidor*, year V. (4th of September, 1797); that is to say, by arresting fifty monarchic conspirators, members of the Chamber, and sending them to Guiana. This *coup d'état* was as legitimate as the insurrection of Aug. 10; for nobody, not even a people, has a right to defy the decree of evolution, to re-act against the current of evolution.

That the government of France, since the fall of Robespierre, is in league with the speculators, is shown by the depreciation of the *assignats*. It was they, as we have seen, that had enabled France to support her numerous armies, and hurl all her enemies back; but that had been possible only by issuing them in quantities, reasonable when compared with the national estates that served as their basis, and by prohibiting all speculation in them. Up to July 28, 1794, there had been issued of paper money seven and a half milliards, in denominations not exceeding five hundred francs, and many of fifty, twenty-five, ten, and even two francs and a half; and on that date the value of national estate unsold was still very large. The Jacobin party had considered it a matter of honor to maintain the national credit, and for that reason sought to bring the *assignats* into the hands of small traders, artisans, and peasants. But with the advent to power of the plutocrats quite another system prevails: it is the evident intention of the government to depreciate the paper money, shown by the insensate emissions now ordered. Not less than *thirty-eight milliards* are issued, in denominations of *ten thousand*, *five thousand*, and *two thousand* francs, fabricated on their face for the account of bankers and contractors, who accept of them at a rate which they themselves, as masters of the money market, regulate, in order, later on, to exchange them *en masse* for land. Other contractors, who, instead of accepting the *assignats*, had caused themselves to be inscribed in the Great Ledger as creditors, later on claim and are allowed land to as much as twenty times their inscriptions, as if the depreciation in the paper money had affected their debt also; and, when any patriot remonstrates, there comes the cool reply, "We must humor these contractors, if we wish our armies to go on conquering."

Then the land-grabbers attack the decree for distributing communal lands. They have a law passed forbidding the communes to distribute these lands, unless, in every case, a special law be passed authorizing them to proceed. That is the last that is heard of that matter. Everywhere they gorge themselves with lands, many paying not even the thirtieth part of their real value.

No wonder there was consternation in their camp when, one day, they suddenly heard of the accidental discovery of a determined attempt to settle, once for all, with them, and to introduce Communism by force into France. This so-called "conspiracy of Babeuf," for which the latter and his principal abetter suffered death, had every chance to succeed at the start; but that also would have been doomed to final failure, for it was another false interpretation of "God's mysterious text." Babeuf's plan contemplated common possession of *every thing*, "common labor and common enjoyment," or *equal* enjoyment, irrespective of talent, zeal, activity, or quality of labor, — a scheme certain to create a dead level, a petrified civilization; and, in order to work such a system, a human nature very different from what we know would evidently be required. But then, it *was* precisely a part of the plan of Babeuf to change human nature, as Robespierre had proposed to do. His disciple Buonarotti tells us that he designed, "instructed by the lessons and experience of the great men of antiquity" (like Robespierre), "to give *new manners* to the French people."

* * *

Shortly afterwards the plutocrats heard of the victories of Bonaparte. What a splendid young man, who took the *sans-culotte* armies to pillage in Italy and Egypt, and thereby diverted their thoughts from the national estates at home, promised them by that annoying decree! Indeed, from that time it is never spoken of: the ribbon of the "Legion of Honor" takes the place of land.

No wonder Bonaparte's *coup d'etat* of 18th *Brumaire* (Nov. 9, 1799) had an immense popularity. The plutocrats had really, for some time, been talking among themselves about what a skilful guardian he would make. There was no one to dispute him the leadership, since that sincere republican, the hero of 18th *Fructidor*, young Gen. Hoche, was dead.

These plutocrats were more clear-headed than the historians who have asserted that this *coup d'état* was a deathblow to the Revolution. It never occurred to them to see in that event the termination of the grand movement commenced, as they put it, July 14, 1789; and they were right.

Many years afterward the nephew of Bonaparte wrote in a pamphlet, *Les Idées Napoléoniennes:* "Without Napoleon the Revolution would have been drowned in the counter-Revolution. He rooted the Revolution in France, and introduced its principal benefits throughout Europe. He recalled the *émigrés*, *without repealing the laws which confiscated their properties.*" The nephew was right: Bonaparte *did root the Revolution in France.* Danton had crushed the counter-Revolution to the ground, but Bonaparte finished the work *by making it impossible for the ancient régime ever to return.* Louis XVIII. in power in 1799 would have been just as dangerous to the Revolution as two years earlier.

For also under Bonaparte the plutocrats remained the real social power. The first thing they thought of, as in every change of government, was the security of their booty. Bonaparte quieted them. He wrote in the Imperial Constitution of 1804, —

"Any law adopted by the Legislative Chamber may be vetoed by any senator if it be contrary to *the irrevocability of all sales of the national estates.*"

He did more: he granted, 1803, to the capitalists the incorporation of the Bank of France, instead of making it a national institution, — a power which the nephew later on extended till 1897.

The Constituent Assembly had made all mines national property. Bonaparte reversed that policy, and gave them, 1810, into the private hands of the plutocrats, by payment to the State of an insignificant royalty.

For ten years he gave them all Europe to plunder, and monstrous armies to purvey.

He established for his motto, "*La carrière ouverte aux talens*" ("All careers open to talent"), which is nothing but the middle-class principle of free competition, "private enterprise."

But that was during the first years of his rule. Later on he degenerated into a vulgar fortune-hunter. He wanted to establish a dynasty; that is to say, he, like the plutocrats, repudiated his own motto: both he and the plutocrats, after securing an advantageous position, insisted on retaining it for themselves and their posterity. Later on still, he conceived the notion of throwing the plutocrats overboard. We now know that he intended to abolish the contract system for furnishing his armies; this the plutocrats found out, and decided to throw him overboard. It was they who made the campaign against Russia so disastrous by intentionally delaying the provisions for the armies. When they heard of the defeat at Waterloo, they caused *rentes* to go up from 59 to 85.

They had, however, made sure of Louis XVIII. beforehand. They had stipulated that the new charter should contain this provision: —

"All property shall be inviolable, *no exception being made as to the present holders of the former national estates.*"

But when his brother and successor seemed inclined to do without them, the plutocrats threw him overboard also, and put on the throne a man right after their own heart.

If Danton, the patriot, had been spared to France, affairs might have taken a very different turn.

Bonaparte — to whom patriotism was an unknown sentiment, who preferred himself to all humanity — would very likely have been unnecessary and impossible; France, in that case, would not have been seduced by the "glory" which he dangled before its eyes, nor would the immense forces which the Revolution placed at the disposal of the leader of France have been used to drench Europe in blood.

The revolutions of 1830 and 1848 would then have been avoided.

The Church and State would have remained separate in France.

Paris would not have been demoralized by the nephew into a city of mere pleasure, and that of the lowest and vilest pleasures.

France might by this time have solved the social problem, instead of being divided into two hostile camps ready to tear each other to pieces.

Events in Great Britain, even, might have taken a very different turn. The great Chartist party collapsed, because the many small tradesmen and middle-class men that composed it got scared by the revolution that so unexpectedly broke out in Paris in 1848; and if that party had succeeded in its demands, who can tell how much more advanced Great Britain might now be?

* * *

One of Danton's noblest disciples, Rousselin de Saint-Albin, strenuously attempted, after the revolution in 1830, to infuse his master's spirit into the victorious *bourgeoisie*. He held aloft before their eyes their great mission to direct all social activities for the benefit of the whole society. He even tried to persuade Louis Philippe to forego the civil list. But the *bourgeoisie* would not hear any nonsense about its "mission." On the contrary, corruption now became a system with them, and Saint-Albin finally ceased his efforts in 1838.

For the last time this must be insisted upon (if for no other reason, simply in order to explain the hatred and resentment which the French working-classes feel toward them): that the French *bourgeoisie*, the French plutocrats, have been in every way the worst of any country. Not alone have they been more neglectful of their duties than any other middle classes, but they have continued to the present day the fraudulent and swindling operations with which they commenced their career. The reason why Edouard Drumont's book, *La France Juive* (*The Jews of France*), has been so popular, that about a hundred editions were published in one year, is, that it is a revelation of the financial rascalities of the French "Jews," whether Christian, Hebrew, or Infidel.

This "Jewish" talent of theirs has made them try to impose on the nation in another matter, — that of taxation. The plutocrats of all countries have tried, by the trickery of *indirect* taxation, to escape their just share of the public burdens; but the French *bourgeoisie* have been much smarter and bolder in that respect. Before the Revolution, as we know, the clergy and nobles were exempt from taxation, which fell with crushing force on the rest of the nation, particularly the peasants. It is a commonplace to say that this was the principal grievance at the time. But the Revolution has certainly not diminished taxation — far from it. There is probably no nation to whom taxes are so burdensome as to the French. The rich middle classes have done all they could in order to enjoy the former immunity of clergy and nobles, and have fancied they could effect this, and throw the load especially on the work-people of the cities, by an indirect tax called the *octroi*.

This is an impost levied on nearly all articles of consumption and prime necessity on entering the cities and towns. It was known during the ancient *régime*, abolished by the Revolution, resurrected by the plutocrats in 1798, and has been continued ever since, except at very short intervals in revolutionary times, when the masses had power. For Paris this impost amounts to seventy francs ($14) per head yearly. Every workingman who has a wife and two children to support, and who, I shall assume, has an annual income of two thousand francs ($400), pays in indirect taxes (*exclusive* of his share of the custom duties) four hundred francs ($80) a year, or *twenty per cent* of his income. A *bourgeois*, on the other hand, who from some light work has the same income, and lives on that, and in addition enjoys a similar revenue from land, without any toil at all, pays, on this second revenue, taxes amounting only to ninety francs ($18), or *four and a half per cent.*

Yet the plutocrats have hugely deceived themselves, for this "octroi" tax is the principal reason why the Parisian workingmen are paid comparatively high wages. Were the tax abolished, undoubtedly their wages would, under our present system, go down correspondingly.

It is well to again observe that there never has been a *poor-law* in France. Louise Michel, the anarchist woman, some years ago went to London to agitate among the working classes. Her stay was very short, probably because she could not speak a word of English. But the story went, that she left precipitately as soon as she was told that they had a poor-law in England, such as it is.

It can be said of the plutocrats of all countries, that they have been weighed in the balance and everywhere found wanting. Nowhere have they paid the least attention to their duties as rulers, but everywhere they have used the opportunities which their rule gave them to farther their private interests exclusively. That is so well shown by that eminently middle-class, or plutocrat, institution, *the public debts.* During the Middle Ages, when the State was in extraordinary need of funds, the rulers — the nobles and clergy — often put their hands into their own pockets, and gave the needful amount to the State as a present. Now the public debt of France is immense; indeed, threatening the State with bankruptcy. This debt is all due to French citizens, to persons of the middle classes. Whenever the State needs more funds, either for a war or public works, these middle classes are ever ready, ay, *anxious*, to put their hands in their pockets, and *loan* their money to the State. The ruling middle classes have so arranged matters that they can make these loans at highly usurious rates; for instance, in 1871 they handed over to the State eighty francs, and received in return a bond for a hundred francs. Thus they live luxuriously, and hope to go on living forever, on incomes found for them by their poor fellow-citizens.

But it will not last forever. There is the handwriting on the wall, — a handwriting people now commence to decipher. The very forces that have brought this capitalist system to its height are now seen at work *undermining it.*

The plutocrats were raised to supreme power because they had a specific mission to fulfil. They have fulfilled it: they have increased production and productivity immensely. Though their motives have been the meanest and most selfish, yet they have really raised society up on a higher plane. It is by the *wage-system* and *competition* that they have been able to do this. But now, when society no longer needs their activity, when productivity is increased sufficiently for all social wants, precisely now *this wage-system and competition are becoming more harmful than useful.*

And it comes about in this way: The plutocrats are our capitalist classes, an industrial, commercial, and moneyed aristocracy, which possesses all means of production; the work-people, on the other hand, — the great bulk of the community, — possess, as a rule, nothing but their naked labor, their labor-power. In order to live, the latter are therefore under the necessity of offering this labor-power to the possessing classes on such terms as the state of the labor-market may allow them to ask, and of accepting employment on such terms as these classes consent to grant them. These terms — in other words, the *wages* they receive — are, as statistics assure us, on an average about *one-half* of the value which their labor really creates. The *wage-system*, then, really means that the capitalist classes allow work-people to labor, say, five hours daily for themselves, on condition that they will labor other five hours daily for their masters *gratis*. This, be it understood, does not mean that the other half goes all into the pockets of the employers — far from it; it is distributed among land-owners, capitalists, commission-merchants, and others, as well. But this gratuitous, unpaid labor constitutes what properly is called *profits*, — those profits on account of which exclusively manufacturers and the other "gentlemen at large" consent to produce and do business *at all*. It is this profit-grinding element which is the economic foundation of our present society, and of society in France since the Revolution.

So far, the wage-system is an injury solely to the work-people.

But it is evident, that since the bulk of the community, the work-people, receive in wages but half of what they produce, they cannot, with their best will, buy back what they produce; and the land-owners, employers, and capitalists, on the other hand, who pocket the other half, cannot, with their best will, consume it all: hence that curious phenomenon called "*over-production*," — a phenomenon which the world has never witnessed until our days. It means, as is well known, that there are large amounts of goods accumulated which they who have money do not want, and which they who do want them cannot buy, for lack of means. The above explains it all: it fully explains why there are, on the one hand, vast amounts of goods heaped up in the warehouses for which there is no *effective* demand, and vast amounts of capital lying idle, on the other hand, — capital that should be used in buying up these accumulated goods, but is not so used.

Then, in order to get rid of this "over-production" somehow, it is, that the plutocrats of all countries are crying for and hunting after *foreign markets.* Therefore it is, that France has taken possession, first of Algiers, then of Tunis, then of Madagascar and Tonkin. This cry and this chase are in themselves signs that the present system is tottering. These foreign markets, however, must, in the nature of things, soon dry up, — are, in fact, drying up. Then this capitalist system must fall.

This changes the wage-system from a workingman's question into a social question. The wage-system is, in other words, *becoming a* SOCIAL *curse.*

That is why people of all classes are beginning to condemn it. To cite but one instance: M. Ch. Gide, professor of political economy at the University of Montpellier, opened a Congress of French Co-operators at Lyons in 1886 with an address on the theme: *The wage-system is an inferior condition of labor and should be abolished.*

It would be equally easy to show that free competition, private enterprise, which has done so much for the upbuilding of this capitalist system, is now also hurrying it on to its doom. By that miserable *secrecy* with which it surrounds all production and enterprises, when success precisely depends on what others produce and do, competition is, in fact, the principal cause of the *crises* that periodically overwhelm us.

It is therefore as clear as any thing in the future well can be, that this capitalist system, introduced in France by the Revolution, will before long, unless forestalled, *end in a catastrophe and a crash.*

But it is certainly not our ruling classes, the plutocrats, who will prevent the crash. Yet that is what is fondly hoped by the Positivists, the disciples of Auguste Comte. They see clearly enough that the present system is but a transitional system, and that a new social order is inevitable; but they imagine, as has been said, that the plutocrats — the great bankers, merchants, and manufacturers — will also, under that new order, be the "chiefs of industry:" that they will, indeed, have much more power and much more wealth than now; but they also fancy that these chiefs will be sufficiently *moralized* by that time to apply their wealth to social uses, to become truly fathers of their people, and extirpate all misery and pauperism.

Our plutocrats be "moralized"! There is absolutely not a particle of evidence for any such change, not merely of heart, but of their very nature. There was a time when this might have been hoped for: that was when their fellow-*bourgeois*, the Jacobins, were exemplifying *Fraternity*. But now quite another sentiment has for a century petrified not merely their hearts, but their heads, — the sentiment of *Individualism*. It has filled them with the delusion that they are born into this world each for the sake of himself; twisted their brains so that they verily think that a man is a kind of monad, governed by independent laws inherent in himself, and that therefore it is the only proper thing for the cheeky to elbow aside the really able man, who, because able, is modest. That sentiment has made them eminently successful in working for their own benefit; but just for that reason they have become unfit, and every year renders them more and more unfit, to work for the benefit of society.

The French *bourgeoisie* has practically proven this by the way they have received certain proposals by Godin, of the *Familistère* of Guise. M. Godin is purely a capitalist by sentiment, but he resembles the Jacobins. He reasons exactly as if he lived in 1793, and was a member of the Mountain; but, in addition, he sees clearly enough that a catastrophe is approaching, and is anxious that his fellow-capitalists should forestall it. He therefore proposes that the State shall, on the death of proprietors, confiscate part of their fortunes, — a small part of small fortunes, but an ever-increasing proportion as they are larger, until it be one-half of the large fortunes. In that way the ruling class might, undoubtedly, stave off the crash. If the State used these immense sums that it in that way would become possessed of, in abolishing pauperism and improving the lot of the poor, it might do away with the worst effects of the wage-system and competition, for these Godin does not dream of abolishing. But he preaches in the wilderness. These fellow-*bourgeois* of his think only of clutching all they can, and "after us the deluge!"

* * *

But it is probable Evolution may forestall the catastrophe. So it was, it will be remembered, in the French Revolution. The middle classes were in supreme power before the crash, — that is, before the fall of the feudal system occurred; and now, after having explained the French Revolution by an hypothesis, this explanation, if it be the true one, ought in its turn to help us to unravel the plot of the drama of the future.

The outcome of the present transition state (brought about in France by the Revolution) is, then, to be a new social order, corresponding to, but on a far higher plane than, the Middle Ages. It will be a social order of *system*, *unity*, and with *co-operation* in a much higher form than before. Are things around us drifting towards such a social order?

We may, it seems to me, easily enough discern two lines of *unconscious* tendencies in society around us, — tendencies which, being the workings of evolution, are not voluntary, not by choice, but thoroughly *spontaneous*, both of them.

One is a movement by *individuals* of all classes, by wage-earners as well as by capitalists.

The other is manifested by an increased activity on the part of society in its organized form; by the *State*, in other words.

Of the movements by individuals, the most significant is that towards *production on a large scale*. By "production" should also be understood transportation and commerce, for they add value to the product, just as well as does the labor of the operatives on raw materials. All that is necessary here is to note this tendency, for all admit that production everywhere — the most trivial as well as the most important — is being concentrated in the hands of richer and richer employers, of larger and larger corporations.

But there is one feature of this concentration that deserves special mention because it is novel, and as yet, it seems, confined to the United States, where the capitalist system is more unfettered than anywhere else. It is what is called the *Trust*. This is monopoly in its most concentrated form. Suppose the presidents of all the incorporated companies in a given branch of industry in the whole country assembled, and one of their number in whom they all have perfect trust — hence the name — selected to perform the function of *absolute* manager, with power to determine, autocratically, how much each company is to produce, and consequently its share in the proceeds, and you have the "trust." It differs from a "pool" in this, that none of the parties can withdraw. The individuality which the law confers on each company by the Act of Incorporation is merged in the "trust," over which the State has not the least control; indeed, the whole arrangement is kept as perfect a secret, as far as the public is concerned, as possible. Such a secret "trust" has been in existence in the United States for several years, and the public has been made to feel its tremendous power; to wit, the Standard Oil Company. This institution is exactly such an absolute union of innumerable smaller incorporated oil companies. But lately, it is said, the rubber industries of the country came together a short time ago in New-York City and formed a similar "trust." It is further said that the pork-packing industries and the cattle-ranches out West are contemplating to do likewise. It is easy to see, that, when these "trusts" become general, — and that is only a question of very short time, — they will revolutionize our present system, for they mean the destruction of competition, which then will be utilized simply to crush their weaker rivals, what precisely the Standard Oil Company has been doing. Some of our newspapers, on getting wind of these "trusts," have become alarmed, seeing in them terrible future dangers to the State. And that, indeed, they would be; they would institute a new slavery, the most formidable slavery that ever existed, — if evolution would stop there. But it will not. That is why this movement is at bottom an *unconscious* one: the capitalists engaged in it are, unconsciously, the greatest revolutionists in the world.

Now, this concentration shows us what is going to be one important feature of the new social order, — shows us that *production* on the LARGEST POSSIBLE SCALE will be *the only practical mode of production in the future.*

Next, we have in the English *co-operative stores* the most successful efforts in the same direction on the part of work-people. They are very suggestive experiments in voluntary co-operation, resulting directly from this concentration of production just spoken of, necessitating, as it does, huge camps of operatives. These co-operative distributive societies have from eight to nine hundred thousand members, and their annual sales already amount to nearly a hundred and fifty million dollars. The noble founders of this sort of co-operation have, undoubtedly, wholly failed in their original object, in the real object they aimed at, which was to entirely revolutionize society by putting an end to the wage-system; for they have wholly failed in making their followers interested in *co-operative production*, — the principal part of their scheme. One of these founders, the venerable Lloyd Jones, died a short time ago of a broken heart, from having to admit that nearly all the nine hundred thousand "co-operators" entirely lack the co-operative spirit, and are anxious only for becoming small capitalists. The wonderful success of *co-operative distribution* is, nevertheless, exceedingly important as a phase of the general movement, and points to

Distribution on the LARGEST POSSIBLE SCALE as the only natural mode of distribution for the future.

Again: we should note the various attempts that have of late been made, mainly in England, in *co-operative farming* by agricultural laborers, and, on the other hand, the immense "Bonanza" farms in our newer States and Territories. They show us that agriculture is subject to the same development as other industries: the latter, that machinery can be as much utilized here as elsewhere; and the former, that agriculturists, though the most individualistic of all classes, are as fit to co-operate as other *workers*. The English "Association Farmers," as they call themselves, though generally working under abnormally unpromising conditions, seem to be satisfied with their success so far, and their successful example can hardly fail to have a great effect on their brethren in other countries.

Our *insurance companies* may be looked upon as instinctive attempts by the possessing classes in a chaotic, anarchic state of society, such as is the one in which we are living, to realize interdependence, with all its beneficent consequences. Especially are our prosperous life-insurance companies most significant and suggestive concerns, as showing how, even in such an individualistic society as ours, robust, prudent, and temperate middle-class men can be made to contribute, of their own accord, to support the offspring and the dependants of the weak, reckless, and dissolute, — for that is what they virtually are made to do.

As such insurance companies for work-people the *trades-unions* of Great Britain can be considered. They have undoubtedly done labor a great service. It is they to whom it is due that the working-hours have been reduced. So far as it is true, what is alleged, that the worker's condition is improved as to amount of wages compared with his condition fifty years ago (what is only true in regard to the *élite* of the workingmen), it is also these trades-unions who have effected that increase. But, having accomplished this, the trades-unions have certainly got into a rut, and seem perfectly self-satisfied, — satisfied with what they have achieved, and, what is worse, satisfied with their position as wage-serfs. They seem to have lost vitality, and to only want to leave things as they are. Yet, however selfish and narrow they may be, they cannot help all the time being of service by the very fact of being so closely associated; they naturally drill their members in association and co-operation. I have a deep conviction that the trades-unions of Great Britain and the United States[1] will play an important part in the social evolution, as already the "Syndical Chambers" of the workers are doing in France. In the latter country the Machinists' Unions are, with the aid of a loan by the Government of $1,200,000, about to form a vast co-operative society for producing machinery, used in the textile manufactures.

This, then, to sum up, is the outcome of the spontaneous, unconscious activity of individuals in *association or corporation:* that they gather together the working-classes in huge armies, and teach them interdependence, and especially that they more and more absorb and *make impossible all industrial activity by isolated individuals.*

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[1] It is noteworthy that the trades-unions of the United States have, of late, taken a very active part in radical politics.

I call these movements "unconscious" as well as spontaneous; for, while the individuals in association and corporation are conscious enough as far as their immediate private, personal interest is concerned, yet they are perfectly unconscious all the time of their associated corporate actions and their consequences.

Now we pass over to the other line of *spontaneous, unconscious* tendencies, — the activities of the *State.*

The State itself is a profound fact of our spontaneous, unconscious association. The State is the organized society, the as yet imperfectly organized society. The tendencies of which we now are going to speak are really efforts towards organizing society more and more closely; that is, towards making the State more and more perfect.

There was a time when it was doubtful whether the State or the Church was going to be the form in which the spontaneous association of men was to be embodied. The Power behind Evolution long ago decided in favor of the State, and relegated the Church to the condition of a merely voluntary association everywhere, practically speaking.

The first of these tendencies manifests itself in the

Post-office Department, with its important branches of banking and expressing. This is, in all civilized countries, the first industrial function the State has taken upon itself; and it has performed that function so well, that none could be found fool enough to vote it back to the hands of private corporations. If two or three companies performed the service in the United States, does any one believe that he could send a postal-card from New York to San Francisco quickly and safely for one cent?

We may note, in passing, that the side functions above mentioned are suggestive germs of future important activities.

Next look at the *National Telegraph Service.* Is it not suggestive that the country of Herbert Spencer, the home of the "let-alone" doctrine, has been so vigorously pursuing the contrary course in practice as to nationalize the telegraph system? The advantages thereby gained are easily seen by comparing Great Britain with the United States, where the telegraph is yet a private monopoly. Even before the sixpenny telegrams were introduced, the former country sent annually four times as many despatches at half the price.

Consider now *Public Education.* There the United States is undoubtedly yet ahead of England. Her common-school system, spanning the whole course from primary schools to the universities, is justly famous; and the public spirit, branding the rich families who keep their children away from them as unpatriotic, is admirable. But as the system, unfortunately, is not yet national, only a section of the country enjoys its blessings. England, however, has undoubtedly since 1870 made giant progress in this direction, and will, it seems, soon surpass the United States by instituting National Board schools rivalling the latter's common schools, and where children will get one meal a day at least. Ah! Spencer is right in looking on the institution of these Board schools as the greatest blow to his individualistic philosophy, for it means adopting the true principle, the corner-stone of public responsibility, that *the education of children is of more concern to the community than to parents*; or, as Danton said, that "Children belong to the nation rather than to parents."

The English *Factory Acts* denote another most interesting step in social evolution. The joint empire of the aristocracy and plutocracy there ceased by the Reform Act of 1832, when the latter acquired undivided, supreme power. They could act pretty much as they pleased, and were not very favorably disposed toward the working-classes, as the new poor-law showed ; but when a real nobleman, Lord Shaftesbury, introduced his Factory Bills, though the plutocrats, with the Quaker John Bright at their head, for a long time fought successfully against them, yet they *had* at last to give in, *had to thwart their own most cherished ideals*, and pass them, as well as the laws against overloading of ships.

Here our splendid *Bureaus for the Statistics of Labor*, with which no other country has any thing to compare, constitute a giant step toward the future organization of labor.

As to the British *Railway System*, it is noteworthy that Sir Bernhard Samuelson, in a recent report of his to the Association of Chambers of Commerce of the United Kingdom, concludes *in favor of* State monopoly of the railway traffic.

And our *Interstate Commerce Act* of 1887 goes a long way toward actually bringing that about here in the United States. I wonder if it was by a mere oversight that steamships were not brought within the control of the Union, as well as railroads.

The *Municipalization of Land* — that is to say, the compulsory sale of land by landlords to municipalities — has been for some years a pet idea with English Radicals, and will, undoubtedly, be one of the first measures to be passed as soon as Irish home-rule has been granted ; and, when accomplished, it very likely may be the greatest step, so far taken, in social evolution. But I also hope, to be sure, that by that time the private experiments in co-operative farming, which has been spoken of, will have attained such importance, that, upon the municipalization (or nationalization) of the land, it will be handed over to *large bodies* of agricultural laborers, to be by them cultivated *co-operatively* on a large scale.

I have also called these activities "unconscious;" for, though "practical" politicians are conscious enough when they concern themselves with the expediency of any of such measures, yet they are absolutely ignorant, or at least careless, of the fact (with which Spencer also never tires of reproaching them) that, in every one of such measures they pass, they are establishing *principles*, — principles *which, by their irresistible momentum, are sure to lead to new types of social organization.*

Now, is it not easy to perceive that these activities of the State tend very strongly to more and more *curtail*, contract, abridge, the PROPRIETARY *sphere of individuals, and develop and strengthen* the COLLECTIVE WILL? Certainly they do; and that is what Spencer, in his pamphlet *The Man vs. The State*, so much bewails. But that is just what, as we saw in Chap. I., has been the *constant tendency* of our civilization, that in which our civilization may be said to consist. At first a given individual was exceedingly powerful, comparatively almighty; by and by that power has been taken from him and devolved on the State. What, however, is most important and suggestive is, that this tendency should manifest itself so strongly and decidedly *now*, in the transition era in which we are living, when a permanent new social order is upon us.

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In the evolution of which the above are simply prominent features (to which the reader can add such others as strike him) *every one is a partaker;* every active individual, wittingly or unwittingly, whether he likes it or no, contributes to it, either as the member of some association or other, or, at all events, as a contributor to the public opinion which directs the State. These unconscious, spontaneous movements from all parts of the social circumference, which collectively we may call the "logic of events," will irresistibly lead us on, first to a certain point in the line of progress, — *the Coming Revolution,* — and thereupon to the *New Social Order.*

But this — that the affairs of men have once for all got an impetus in this direction — is not all there is of evolution, or even the most prominent feature of it, as Herbert Spencer seems to think. He virtually says to his readers, "Let us fold our hands: we cannot hurry society forward. It will of itself come out all right in the distant future."

The point is, that human society does not develop quite the same as, for instance, a plant. The evolution of man needs the co-operation of men, takes place by *the conscious efforts of men.* And it so happens that the Power behind Evolution is now at work on certain *minds* among us. As the French Revolution was made in the minds of Danton and his contemporaries before 1789, so the Coming Revolution is now being prepared among us.

This is a movement just as spontaneous as the others we have spoken of. These minds are twisted in a certain direction, without any choice, any merit, on their part; but, in contradistinction to the others, they are *conscious actors.* So soon as they are aware of the change that has occurred in them, they consciously push on the car of progress, often under great sufferings, often sick at heart from lack of sympathy.

This conscious evolution does not comprise all active persons, like the former movements. There are some stupid men in the world. They contribute nothing consciously to the solution of the social problem, and it is wasted labor to try to win them over. As Goethe says: *Mit der Dummheit kämpfen Götter selbst vergebens* ("With stupidity even the gods contend in vain").

Then, there are the selfish ones, — those who find their advantage in the present anarchy, and others, like poor clerks, who hope, some time or other, by some lucky chance, to become themselves rich, so that they in turn may *lord* it over others; that latter class is especially numerous in the United States.

Lastly, there is the vast indolent multitude of all classes who never have taken the initiative, and never want to; the multitude that have blocked the way for so many noble reformers who, contemplating that heavy, inert mass before them, and despairing how to move it, have finally died of broken hearts. Let us never reckon on their *conscious* assistance. Danton knew this. That is the reason why revolutions are legitimate.

For the Power behind Evolution has a method of its own in dealing with man's affairs. It irresistibly pushes us all, — the stupid, the selfish, the indolent multitude, — unwittingly and unwillingly, onward; or, if you please, *lifts us all upwards*. At the same time, it *raises up a comparatively few to co-operate with itself*, and through whom it acts. *These, then, are the conscious actors in the evolution*, a very small class; for while that Power needs men, absolutely cannot get along without men, it requires but a very few.

Discontent is the means it makes use of to raise up and educate its co-laborers; an unselfish discontent, and therefore by no means synonymous with unhappiness. These feel discontented with this age in which they and we are living, as about the meanest age of all, with its organized inclemency of man to man; and yet they may feel very happy in enjoying consciousness in flesh and blood just now when we stand on the threshold of the most glorious of ages. This discontent is to evolution what steam is to the engineer; it is the precursor of a structural change; it is what the butterfly may be supposed to feel when it is going out of the chrysalis state. It convinces us that *we have arrived at the crisis*.

It is the lack of this discontent that is the great defect in

Spencer; *it is the want of this discontent that makes him an indolent optimist, with nothing specific to suggest for men to do.* Our philanthropists, on the other hand, may be said to have a surfeit of that feeling; that is why they always impatiently want to know, "What shall we do from this day *forthwith* to change things?" They are right as to heart, but wrong in their heads.

Those only who are filled with both discontent *and* right convictions are fit to be true co-workers of the Power behind Evolution; they are Victor Hugo's "sagacious, serene, and profound minds," who at length have truly deciphered "God's mysterious text." They have in these days the same important function to perform that Montesquieu, Diderot, and Rousseau had a century ago, — that of putting ideas into the minds of the people; of *accomplishing the intellectual, the* MENTAL REVOLUTION, *in the brains of the active part of nations.* But just in proportion as the mental revolution is complete, will all danger of a sanguinary crisis be averted, — that is one of the lessons the French Revolution should have taught us.

Again: just like the mental revolution of last century will the one now to be accomplished be brought about by *books;* they will play even a greater *rôle* now, because now everybody reads.

Who, then, are the men with discontent and right convictions? and which are these books?

My readers who have followed me so far will have guessed that I refer to the Collectivists; not Anarchists, please observe, nor, if a distinction be made, Communists, but *Collectivists,* — the thinkers who inspire themselves from the French Collectivism of Saint-Simon and the German Collectivism of Karl Marx, and who, I think, will work out a third, complete doctrine, *Anglo-Saxon* in its characteristics.

That which distinguishes the above writers from all other social innovators is, that they emphasize, *not* that the new social order *ought* to be and therefore *will* be, but that it *will* be and therefore ought to be, realized.

Saint-Simonism, as developed by Bazard and Enfantin, who seem to me almost greater than the master they acknowledge, owes its start directly to the impulse of the French Revolution. I have already, in Chap. I., set out Saint-Simon's fruitful conception of organic and critical periods of history. Saint-Simonism, furthermore, insists on the fact, that in the march of humanity the circle of *association* goes on enlarging unceasingly, until it will end in universal association. That is to say, it insists that the State will develop into an association exclusively of workers, of useful members; that as such it will assume the ownership, the office of a trustee, of all capital, instead of, as now, that capital being the private property of individual families; that then naturally all privileges founded on birth or wealth will disappear, and that *capacity* will be the only quality that will entitle persons to dispose of and use this capital. And the principal merit of Saint-Simonism is, that it teaches that this development, this change, will *not* be brought about *because human intelligence approves of it* and resolves on it, but that its *raison d'être* is the *Supreme Will*, and that, as it is being accomplished, so to say, *of* ITSELF, the *human conscience will, little by little, conform itself to it, and bring itself into harmony with it.* Again: Saint-Simonism drew attention (as I have done in the preceding pages) to the instinctive tendencies of its time, which pointed to order and a new organization, particularly to the office of the *bankers*, these intermediaries between workers needing instruments of labor, and the possessors of such instruments not knowing how to use them or caring to do so.

But Saint-Simon and his disciples made the very natural mistake of assuming that their time was the commencement of the new social order. It is the great merit — and this has been the great mission — of *German Collectivism*, that it has made clear and emphasized that this is a transition period. For it is Karl Marx, the most prominent exponent of German Socialism, who has shown us the workings of the wage-system and competition, and how these, after having brought the capitalist system to its present height, are now undermining it, and will before long lead it to a catastrophe and a crash. After proving this to us, and especially to the working-classes, Marx in effect continues, "Prepare yourselves; organize yourselves. The fruit is soon ripe; capitalism must soon fall. Then at length you can secure to yourselves the full reward of your labor." Marx, as well as German Collectivism, is thus, like the German mind, essentially *critical*. He has concerned himself almost exclusively with the *evolution toward destruction;* it is his great achievement that he has proven this scientifically and conclusively. He has never been successfully refuted, and never can be. It is true that this capitalist system *is* evolving toward a catastrophe and a crash, *unless forestalled.*

But this is not the last word, — a critical philosophy never can be, — and Marx never assumed it was. The last word must relate to the nature and outlines of the new social order, and to that Marx devotes only a few lines in the closing part of his *Capital.* Moreover, he assumes the crash, and then suggests the new system, but as an empirical expedient that should be adopted, as a *personal conceit that may or may not come true.* This gives rise to the complaints, not so very unreasonable, by inquirers, that Collectivism lacks positive formulas, and fully accounts for the fact that many Socialists, when they are pressed, often do not know whether they are Communists or Collectivists, and also explains the coquetry of some with Anarchism, with which our agreement is really but superficial.

Well, it is not always in the nations that give rise to new ideas that they reach their highest development. It seems to me that Morley's "sacred torch which shifts from bearer to bearer," after passing from France to Germany, is now about to return to Anglo-Saxons; that it is they, these practical folk who dislike to tear down before they know what to build up, who will develop these positive formulas of Collectivism in its larger outlines, though, of course, not in its details, and *supplement* Marx by working out the more important and wider circle of *constructive* evolution. This will then constitute *Anglo-Saxon Collectivism*, and will finish the mental preparation for the Coming Revolution.

The evolution of this capitalist system towards a catastrophe is a truth, but *it is not the whole truth*. For, fortunately, side by side with these destructive tendencies there are everywhere around us constructive tendencies at work — this is the other half of the truth. It is well to know that a flower is decaying, but it is at least equally important to note that at the same time the fruit is ripening. The capitalist system is being sapped in its foundations, true; but evolution is also, under our very eyes, laying the foundation, *shaping the outlines, of the social order that is to replace it.* Verily, we may be said to be witnessing *a race between destructive and constructive tendencies*, the result of which may very well be, that *the new system may forestall and anticipate the catastrophe and the crash.* Instead of our new social order being an empirical expedient, Anglo-Saxon Collectivism will thus show and emphasize that it is being moulded and shaped *now*, and by the present society.

Let us return to and contrast our two lines of spontaneous, unconscious activities, — constructive tendencies.

That on the part of individuals, we saw, was a constantly growing concentration, more and more absorbing the efforts of isolated individuals; making, in fact, the efforts of isolated individuals impossible. The movement on the part of the collectivity — that is, the nation — is also a constantly growing centralization, more and more absorbing the sphere of individuals.

Is it not easy to see that the time will surely come when these two opposing tendencies, forces, will come in contact? *Is* it not already the fact, that, in all civilized countries, *the collectivity IS face to face with overgrown corporations, whose interests are diametrically opposed to the interests of the community at large?*

Can any one doubt the issue?

Of course, *private control will have to give way to public control* along the whole line.[1] The function hitherto performed by capitalists, that of being social paymasters, will devolve on the State.

This will sufficiently indicate the general character of the *third organic Social Order* awaiting us.

Capitalists will give way to society, *organized society*, — the NATION. Evolution will end in the *supremacy of the collective will*, and that will be embodied, not in the commune, the county, as some maintain, but in the nation, if United Italy, United Germany, and our own Union have a meaning.[2] The State, the Nation, the Fatherland, is an indispensable step of evolution toward Humanity. Ownership of the means of production by *individuals* will be replaced by ownership and *supreme control* of the means of production by *the collectivity*. Then social functions will, for the first time, be properly, adequately performed, which they cannot be as long as they are regarded from the stand-point of the producer, and not from that of the consumer, — society. That the latter shall be provided for; that, for instance, meat shall be supplied, is the essential; that the butcher shall have his pay is secondary. That is why one of the liberal professions, say a physician, has always been honored above a trader, — because he is ready to perform his function without making the fee his object; and so in the new social order every one's daily business will be freed from its present pettiness, and elevated to the dignity of a public function.

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[1] The expropriation of but one capitalist class, — as that of the land-owners, — except as a first step, would not constitute a social revolution, but downright robbery.

[2] The movement for Irish home-rule is no exception, for it will effect a *real* union of the three kingdoms.

This outcome is the evident decree of evolution; this is the enduring social order which all previous eras have been, and this transition order in particular is, preparing for. Our plutocrats have been invested with supreme power expressly to be instrumental in making ready for its advent.

With it we shall have reached the last step in our progress in co-operation. From slavery, through serfdom and wagedom, we shall attain to *voluntary co-operation of all*, — SOCIAL CO-OPERATION, having for our motto, "*Leisure for all, idleness for none.*"

Note, however, that control of all means of production by the collectivity does not imply that the government is to do all the nation's business. There will be a centralization of *power*, but not of functions, except, say, these three: that of being general *statistician*, general *manager*, and general *arbitrator*. These the collectivity will take upon itself, leaving all the rest to perfectly free associations of workers.

There will hardly be a "government" at all, but there will be a vigorous *administration* of affairs; that is to say, government over *things*, instead of over men. It will be vigorous, because it will be administered by the *competent, skilful, and wise*. Here, of course, the stereotypic question will be put: "Ah, but how will you secure the competent, skilful, and wise?" The answer is: By true *democracy;*

that is to say, the competent, skilful, and wise will inevitably gravitate toward the leadership of affairs when they are selected *from below* by *free citizens, independent of all individuals*, and that is the *only* way of securing them.

How otherwise we imagine the New Social Order, can be learned, by those who are interested, from the former work by me, already mentioned, *The Co-operative Commonwealth*, which may be said to treat of the *statics* of Collectivism, as this volume has concerned itself with its *dynamics*.

* * *

Which nation will, first of all, realize Collectivism?

It has lately made giant progress in all European countries, as well as in Great Britain and the United States, both as to number and character of disciples, and, especially, by all accepting the doctrine of Marx. There can be no doubt that before long serious attempts will be made on the Continent to bring it in by force. I am in this not thinking of Russia, for her coming crisis will be her "French Revolution," in which connection it is interesting to note that the Russian plutocracy have, during the last thirty years, remarkably increased in wealth, compared with the rest of the nation. No; the first country to suggest itself is, of course, France.

The Paris Commune of 1871 was a perfectly spontaneous movement, coming absolutely unexpected on the leaders of the working-classes. The *bourgeoisie*, in their usual hatred of the masses, determined, at the fall of the Commune, to tear out this revolutionary spirit by the roots, and went to work, in the words of the clerical writer of *The Jews of France*, "with a disregard of human life never before witnessed." They murdered in cold blood thirty-five thousand of the flower of Parisian manhood, and deported as many more. For five years the work-people gave no sign of political life. At last, in 1876, by the generosity of the Jew Cremieux, the trades-unions of France were enabled to hold a congress in Lyons, at which they declared that they had nothing to do with Socialism in any form.

But in that year two men returned from exile, who, almost in the twinkling of an eye, were entirely to change the aspect of things. They were Benoit Malon and Jules Guesde. Thanks to their agitation, at the second congress of the trades-unions at Paris, in 1877, there were eight votes in favor of a Collectivist resolution; and in 1879, at the third (very largely attended) congress of trades-unions and workingmen's "circles" at Marseilles, a purely Collectivist resolution, in the spirit of Marx, was passed by a two-thirds majority. Since that time no large gathering of French workmen has ever taken place that has not resolved in favor of Collectivism. Even the last Trades-Union Congress, held in 1886 in Paris, under the auspices of the government, which granted railroad passes and five thousand francs, closed by declaring itself, to the great scandal of the *bourgeois* press, Collectivists. Everywhere in the industrial centres the *élite* of the workmen are Collectivists. They have in many cities, Paris included, Collectivist aldermen, and seven workingmen members of the Chamber of Deputies. In Paris in 1886, on the resignation of Rochefort, the Collectivist candidate received a hundred thousand votes; while his opponent, representing the whole opposition, clerical, monarchist, and republican, received but a hundred and thirty-five thousand votes. But it is only work-people that adopt Collectivism in France. The educated classes and tradespeople hold aloof, and will have nothing to do with it.

Nothing, therefore, more likely than to hear of a revolutionary movement in France during either of the approaching centennial years of the great Revolution. In spite of the crushing opposition to overcome, it is far from unlikely to succeed at first, especially at Paris. The Parisian *bourgeoisie* is notoriously, since the Commune, more cowardly than ever, and may be reckoned on to give up their city without a blow to the revolutionary element. But the danger of a successful counter-revolution is there so great that there is but little hope of lasting success; for there is no doubt that the French *bourgeoisie* will prove itself just as unpatriotic as the nobility of a century ago, and call on Germany to interfere. And if, on the other hand, the revolution commences in Germany, there is the double danger of interference from France and Russia. And then, the terribly bitter and revengeful sentiments we have noted in the French working-classes, however excusable, constitute but a poor foundation on which to erect a new social order. We can therefore rely, for the first realization of Collectivism, only on Great Britain and the United States. In both countries there is no crushing opposition to overcome, in the first place, — only public opinion, — and there is no foreign interference to fear. Great Britain, moreover, as we have seen, has been the leader in the great changes ever since the Reformation. *Noblesse oblige!* It becomes her or us to lead in the Coming Revolution.

That Collectivism has made wonderful progress in Great Britain during the last ten years, is evident to all. Poets, artists, fellows of colleges, ministers both of the Church of England and the Church of Scotland, besides a great number of educated men, openly work for the cause, and many more secretly. In Great Britain, then, in contradistinction to France, it is the brain-workers that lead, and the muscle-workers that follow, — a fact of great importance. And the latter really have commenced to follow. That was shown in a remarkable manner by the great demonstration in Hyde Park on Easter Monday, 1887, composed admittedly of the very best sort of people. They crowded by preference round the two Socialist platforms, which literally were surrounded by an ocean of uplifted, attentive, and enthusiastic faces. These people might possibly have been attracted in such numbers by mere curiosity, but they would not have applauded *what they did not like to hear.* London Radical crowds are not hypocritic. On the same Easter Monday, Collectivist missionaries from London held a meeting, that grew to be of enormous size, in the colliery district of Northumberland, to which large numbers of miners, said by all to be among the most respected men of the various districts, marched in procession from villages, some six to eight miles distant. And the same is the case wherever one goes in England or Scotland — even more in Scotland than in England. In London, in a hundred halls, Sunday after Sunday, audiences listen to lectures mostly on Socialism in some shape or other.

In Paisley (Scotland) the provost introduces the poet William Morris in a sympathetic speech, and takes the chair. In Glasgow Edward Caird, professor of moral philosophy, does the same to this writer. In London a member of Parliament, Cunningham Graham, presides, and regrets he is "not yet" a Socialist. In England there are two large Christian Socialist societies, — one in London, that publishes an excellent monthly journal, — and another in Clifton, Bristol, that issues occasional pamphlets, which John Ruskin declares to be the best pamphlets on economic subjects in English. In Edinburgh there is a large students' Socialist society, and in all the British universities classes have been formed for the study of Socialism, and ministers deliver everywhere Socialist sermons.

In the United States and Great Britain it is, of course, by *political methods* that Collectivism will be realized. It certainly will not take many years to make it in the latter country an issue of practical politics.

The present alliance between the Gladstonians and the Irish party is a most promising fact. Indeed, they now may be said to form one thoroughly *democratic* party, since the

Whigs and Chamberlain are, fortunately, eliminated, as they had to be some time or other. Home-rule, soon to be granted to Ireland, will cause a real union between that island, hitherto a ball and chain on England's limbs, and Great Britain, and make the two democracies walk forever after hand in hand. Then all the tremendous social questions that now for so long have been waiting for a solution will come to the front. Great Britain is the only country where Collectivists are so fortunately situated that *they can accomplish the Coming Revolution constitutionally.*

Considering the speed with which we are now progressing, it is by no means presumptuous to predict that by the close of another generation Collectivists may succeed in electing a majority of the House of Commons; and that, according to the British Constitution, as it has in practice been worked out, would be all that would be required. They could then constitutionally demand the realization of Collectivism; and if the plutocrats should refuse or threaten or attempt violence, the Collectivist majority would have the immense advantage of having the British bias for legality on their side, and could summon, with all promise of success, the working-classes to rise behind them and enforce their demand, what these would hardly do in any other contingency.

In this connection it is very regrettable that the great poet William Morris, who has done so much for Collectivism in Great Britain, despises political action and "parliamentary half-measures;" that is to say, he is not as clear-sighted as Herbert Spencer, who, from fear of our cause, warns Parliament that in every one of their "half-measures" they are establishing *principles* which by their momentum are sure to lead to Collectivism. And to think that Morris could by this time be in Parliament, with a little group around him, if not of Collectivists, at least of advanced Radicals, forcing affairs still more in a Collectivist direction! Instead of that, he has the truly Utopian idea of a universal strike; i.e., that one fine day all the workers will fold their arms, and refuse to do a stroke of work until they get Collectivism.

In the United States we are not nearly as well situated. Here the Constitution must first be changed, which requires a three-fourths majority of all the States. That almost necessarily drives us Collectivists into unconstitutional, at least extra-constitutional, ways. However, as soon as half of the effective majority in America once *wills* Collectivism, no doubt they will find a way, as the anti-slavery Republican party did when they first drove a dozen States out of the Union, and then admitted them — on condition of sanctioning the abolition of slavery.

But meanwhile, until Collectivism becomes an issue of practical politics, whether in Great Britain or the United States, it is our business to win over the small minority, the choice band of spirits who in the near future will effect the mental revolution, — the business of us whom the Power behind Evolution has raised up as pioneers, unable to think and act otherwise than as we do, though often, in our longing for sympathy, deeply feeling our isolation. There are plenty of thoughtful, generous youths, both men and women, all around us, who need only fully to understand our philosophy to be converted to it. That has already been done to some extent in England and Scotland, as we have seen, during the last five years; but here in America we have as yet hardly had our first real success.

That Collectivism, so far, has made so little progress among Anglo-Saxons, there are several things to account for; first, this: that hitherto only the critical method has been employed in expounding Socialism, — a method very effective with the German or French mind, but leaving no impression at all on the Anglo-Saxon mind. The Anglo-Saxon who hitherto happened to study Collectivism, met only with teachings of evolution towards destruction; and such teachings roused no enthusiasm in him, created in him no sentiment of *duty*. He might be convinced that a catastrophe and crash were impending; but "the crash," he would say, "will come soon enough, when it does come, without my help." On the other hand, once convince our young men and women that Collectivism is the evident decree of evolution; that the work to do is constructive rather than destructive, and that they have it in their power materially to hasten its advent, and anticipate, *forestall*, the catastrophe, and we shall rouse in them a solemn feeling of duty; they will feel *a call* to co-operate with the Power behind Evolution.

Again: the doctrine that Collectivism is a *class movement* has certainly been misunderstood. It has been interpreted to mean, that it is a movement of those who work with their hands against all others. Yet it means only this (but also this decidedly): that it is a movement of all the workers, whether with hands or with brains, against those who monopolize the means of labor. Thus, in "workers" are included all physicians, all teachers, all men of science, as far as they are not capitalists. And while, undoubtedly, Collectivism will, in the first place, benefit work-people in the narrower sense, — level them up, — it is by no means they who are exclusively interested, or the only ones upon whom we call. No great social movement ever succeeded before educated men took hold of it; and Collectivism especially, as we have seen, is an outcome of the development of the *whole* social body. It is also worth noting, that, with hardly an exception, the leading Collectivists in every country have not come from, and do not come from, the manual workers. Anglo-Saxon Collectivism in particular will therefore address itself, I am sure, to thoughtful, generous minds of *all* classes, and its leaders be a *band of choice spirits from all classes.*

Young men and women! it is impossible that you can look at the lives that are led around you, or contemplate your own lives, and not be filled with a noble discontent. Then reflect that you are on the threshold of the Golden Age for mankind, and that it is your high privilege to hasten its advent. Think how blessed your old age will be, if you fill your existence with high efforts, for this, indeed, constitutes the only true life; if the *ideal* is the bond that joins your friends to you, for this, indeed, constitutes the only true friendship!

This brotherhood of conscious co-operaors with the Power behind Evolution need not be large; a mental revolution, like all great successful revolutions, is made, not by numbers, but by *wills*. The *effective* majority of any nation — that is, the number of those who lead its march, and time its progress — itself is comparatively small; all that has to be done is, to *turn the brains* of that "effective majority," as the anti-slavery men did the brains of the leaders of the Republican party, and the Home-Rulers those of the Gladstonians, and the revolution is virtually accomplished. What we shall have to struggle with and to conquer is sluggishness, ingrown habits, traditional views, and mistaken notions, more than pure selfishness. One of the most effective weapons for that struggle will be the press, — to a great extent the already established press. And one way for the brotherhood to utilize the latter may be the organization of private societies, in constant communication and exchange with each other, for the purpose of writing short and pithy letters on topics of the day, and having one such letter each and every day published now in one, now in another, of the local newspapers. My experience teaches me that not even the most inimical journal will refuse a well-written letter; at all events, as long as it is unaware of its being the fruit of a "conspiracy." Another way to utilize the established press might be the method adopted by Brisbane in the forties in New York City in his agitation for Fourierism, — the renting of a column of some popular journal, and filling it periodically with Collectivist matter.

There is one thing that will give these Anglo-Saxon Collectivists a peculiar force, and serve them as a wonderful stimulus, and that is — *faith.* Thoughtful Anglo-Saxons, however unorthodox, still refuse to give up the idea of Providence. When they become convinced that our present stage of civilization is a necessary result of the force of things, that men are Collectivists because their minds have by necessity been twisted in this direction, and that a Collectivist Order is the unavoidable outcome of evolution, they will more than ever see the hand of Providence in human affairs. They will know nothing of a blind Fate behind Evolution, but place there a Will, an Intelligence, a helpful Presence. That will not prevent them from heartily co-operating with those who, like Danton, are doing the will of that Presence, even if doubting its existence: they will only claim they are more clear-seeing. But their faith will lend to their convictions a peculiar strength, since it enables them to give to those who inquire of them, "What is it you propose?" this answer: —

"*We* do not propose any thing. It is the Power behind Evolution that proposes this change, and therefore it *must* be accomplished, at the risk of social heart-burnings, at the risk even of setting class against class, at the start."

Collectivists can properly adopt the motto of the French revolutionists of last century, and in their turn sing "*Ça ira!*" ("It will go!"), for, after all, it is but the revolutionary equivalent of that old cry of the Crusaders, —

"GOD WILLS IT!"

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